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## **Gender responsive climate change policies and female political representation - the key to a more sustainable and just future?**

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Gender responsive climate change policies and female  
political representation – the key to a more sustainable  
and just future?

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THESIS

Master of Science in International Relations and Diplomacy

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Second Reader: Professor Madeleine Hosli

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# Abstract

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In recent years, the two issues of gender equality and the climate crisis have been increasingly interlinked. Researchers have established that climate change exacerbates existing inequalities, and thus, women are more vulnerable to the effects of the climate crisis. However, there is a gap in knowledge on how gender impacts climate change, and on women's potential to influence climate change action, planning and policy. The lack of research on this topic contributes to enduring gender assumptions and hinders progress on uniting these two issues. The aim of the study is thus to investigate whether and how gender intersects with climate change in the context of the Scandinavian countries. Moreover, it also participates in a larger debate on whether high levels of female political representation and participation affects policy outcomes. The thesis takes a qualitative approach and is exploratory in nature. The data utilized in the analysis is collected through interviews and policy documents. It applies feminist theory to the analysis and addresses the research question by combining the findings from the document analysis and drawing comparisons to the existing research. This research adds to the limited studies on the integration of gender into climate change policies and action and strengthens the argument that a gender perspective should be integrated into national policies, action plans and international climate agreements.

**Key words:** gender equality, gender mainstreaming, female political participation, climate change action, mitigation, adaptation

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

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EIGE – European Institute for Gender Equality

IR – International Relations

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

UN – United Nations

UNCED – United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

UN Women – United Nations Women

# 1.INTRODUCTION

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The impact and devastating consequences of climate change can currently be felt across the world. The inevitable and all-around devastating nature of the crisis makes it the defining crisis of our time. It has long been framed as a scientific and technological issue, overlooking how it relates to human development. However, these changes do not affect everyone equally, as marginalized groups everywhere are disproportionately affected by climate change and global warming. The largest marginalised group extends across country borders and continents, are girls and women. Girls and women across the world are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, and at the same time they are less represented in climate decision-making ranging from the local level to international climate negotiations (unfccc.int/gender, 2022). The existing literature on the two issues has thus primarily been focused on the vulnerability of women, particularly in the Global South (Resurrección, 2013, p. 38). The emphasis on the linkage between the vulnerability of women and climate change contributes to denying women agency, and consequently, women's ability and potential to influence all aspects of climate change on local, national and international level has been largely overlooked (Arora-Jonsson, 2011, p. 748).

In recent years there has been a growing interest and recognition of women as agents of change and their role in adaptation and mitigation policies and initiatives (Resurrección, 2013, p. 38), especially in the context of developing countries. Gendered dimensions in climate change policy and action in the Global North has not received substantial attention, and there is therefore a gap in knowledge on how they interact with one another (Röhr, 2018, p.1). The importance of this topic is indisputable, as they are two of the most important and interrelated issues of today. In 2022, the importance of this topic has been made even more evident. For instance, 'Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow' was the theme of international women's day 2022, by UN Women. Furthermore, 'achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes' was the priority theme of the 66<sup>th</sup> Commission on the Status of Women (unwomen.org, 2022)

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the linkage between gender equality and climate action, by focusing on the impact of social equalization and female representation on climate change policies and action. The following **research question** has thus been formulated:

*How does the integration of gender equality influence and intersect with climate change action, policy, and decision-making?*

The thesis will analyse this topic in a Scandinavian context, using Norway, Sweden and Denmark as case studies. The Scandinavian countries are interesting cases due to their reputation as gender equality pioneers and vocal climate change advocates (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2015, p. 310). While some research has been carried out on this specific topic in an EU context, there is a gap in research that seek to identify whether/how gender equality and climate change action intersect each other in the Scandinavian countries, which this paper will seek to bridge. Determining the impacts of gender equality on climate change policies, is highly important as it may play a key role in ensuring a sustainable and just future and combating the effects of climate change. Furthermore, it may highlight specific policy areas and sectors, where the integration of gender will be essential. This thesis is centred around the assumption that employing a gendered lens and integrating this into climate action and policies will make valuable contributions and strengthen mitigation and adaptation efforts (Röhr, 2018, p.4). It is hoped that this research enhances our understanding of why gender equality is crucial in order to create a sustainable and just future for all. Moreover it provides new insights to the ‘larger feminist debate on the extent to which women in decision-making make a difference to gendered outcomes’ (Allwood, 2020, p. 4).

Throughout this paper the term gender will refer to the feminist definition of gender as a ‘power relationship, not simply a sex difference refers to the social and cultural practices, relations, organizations, and institutions around presumed biological differences between men and women’ (Kronsell, Rosqvist & Hiselius, 2016, p. 204). Furthermore, it is necessary to clarify exactly what is meant by ‘climate action’. According to the definition provided by the European Commission, climate action refers to the following: 1) Mitigating climate change, 2) Adapting to the impact of climate change by building resilience to phenomena such as flooding, droughts and other extreme weather events, 3) contributing to understanding the causes of climate change (European Commission, 2020).

This thesis proceeds as follows. The next chapter reviews existing literature on gender equality, mainstreaming, female political participation/representation, and the linkages to climate action. The third chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis that is rooted in feminist international relations theory. Chapter four presents and justifies the research designs and the methods by which the research and analyses were conducted. Chapter five contains the data

collection and analysis that is guided by the research questions, and concepts from the theoretical framework. The analysis is divided into the following themes: 1) female political participation/representation, 2) gender blindness, 3) power structures and priorities, 4) climate solutions and technology and 5) green transitions based on social responsibility. Chapter six presents the results of the research and discusses the significant findings. The final section draws together the key findings, ties together the various theoretical and empirical strands and includes a discussion of the implication of the findings to future research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

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As the introduction states, this study will seek to fill the gap in knowledge on the linkage between gender equality and climate change action and policymaking in developed states. However, it is a growing area of research which this thesis aims to make a valuable contribution to. The thesis connects the two undoubtedly important issues of gender equality and climate change action, and the literature review will therefore employ concepts and existing research surrounding both issues.

After conducting an extensive literature search, I categorised the existing research into three sub-topics, hence, this chapter is subdivided into three sections. Firstly, it examines the existing research and literature on the topics of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and climate change. Secondly, it reviews the existing studies on female political representation and climate change policy outcomes. The third section highlights the abovementioned concepts in a Scandinavian context and provides a historical perspective on how these countries became pioneers in gender equality. It contextualises how these gender equality approaches developed in the Scandinavian countries.

### 2.1 The Intersection Between Climate Change Action and Gender

This study is centred around the concepts of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and female political representation/participation and how these concepts converge with climate action. The climate crisis has long been framed as a purely scientific or technical issue, where human development, social and political effects of climate change were overlooked (Sasvari, 2010, p.1). However, in recent years the world has ‘progressively recognized that inequalities of various natures that might be based on gender, age, ethnicity, or class have an impact also on how people experience climate change, their capacities to cope with its impacts and their potential to influence decision-making at all local, national, and international level’ (Sasvari, 2010, p.1). It is now well established from a variety of studies that gender and climate change are two interrelated issues. For instance, Hemmati and Röhr conducted a study in 2009, where they found that gender equality was finally ‘beginning to be accepted as one of the core principles of mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts’ (2009, p.25). The notion of integrating gender into climate policymaking, was a result of the newfound focus on *gender mainstreaming*, in all policy areas. Gender mainstreaming was developed as an approach

towards realising and promoting gender equality in all policy areas (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022).

Gender mainstreaming was first introduced at the 1985 Nairobi World Conference on Women and then established as a strategy through the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted at the 1995 fourth United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing. The strategy entails including women's experiences and needs through the incorporation of gender perspectives into 'all policy areas, at all stages, at all levels' (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2016, p.66). In the context of climate change, gender mainstreaming thus involves the 'integration of gender equality in the preparation, design and implementation of climate policies' (Svendsen, Weber, Factor, Winther, Engelsbak and Fischer-Bogason, 2021, p.8).

Moreover, it rests on the idea that there is a gender dimension that can be found in the underlying norms of institutions (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 66). Much of the existing literature on gender mainstreaming is centred around why it has failed to realise its radical potential (Allwood, 2013; Guerrina and Wright, 2016; Rao et al., 2016; Allwood, 2020, p. 5). It is also crucial to establish that the authors of these studies often make a distinction between gender mainstreaming as a 'transformative, agenda-setting idea with radical feminist potential and gender mainstreaming as an integrationist policy practice' (Allwood, 2020, p.5). The transformative view on gender mainstreaming is rooted in feminist theories of gender and was introduced as a way of 'radically transforming policy approaches to gender inequalities' (Allwood, 2020, p.6). There will be a further elaboration on this in the theoretical framework section of the study.

### *Female Political Participation*

One of the ways to achieve gender mainstreaming is through increased and active female political participation (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009, p.19). The following section of the literature review spotlights and defines the concepts of female political participation. Does female political participation mean an equilibrium of men and women present in political settings? Whether that is national governments, climate change organisations or international climate negotiations. Or does gender balance not necessarily reflect actual representation? These are questions that will be illuminated in this section. It highlights prior studies that have addressed female political participation and representation, and how this affects climate change action and policies.

Although women represent half of the world's population. They are underrepresented in decision-making processes at all governance levels across the world (Delys, 2014, p.5). Many agreements and plans have been set in motion in order to increase female political participation, however these theoretical gender-responsive approaches do not suffice when it does not translate into action. Furthermore, as Kanter contends, a certain number of women need to be present in order for their presence to be felt (1997, p. 208). Thus, the research to date has been largely quantitative in nature, where several studies have revealed a correlation between female political participation and climate change outcomes. For instance, Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi established that a higher number of female representations in national parliaments resulted in countries adopting more stringent climate policies (2019, p. 151). Similarly, Ergas and York confirmed that CO2 emissions per capita were lower in states where women enjoyed higher degrees of political status (2012, p. 955)

Despite the existing research on the topic suggesting that the inclusion and representation of women may be highly influential to climate policies and action, the gender gap in political empowerment and participation remains large. According to the 2021 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum covering 156 countries, women represent only 26.1% of 35,500 parliament seats and 22.6% of over 34,000 ministers worldwide. This is also reflected in national and global climate frameworks, where women's participation in climate-change-related decision-making processes at local, national and global levels is still low (Acosta et al., 2015; Thuy et al. 2015; Gumucio and Tafur-Rueda 2015; Huyer, 2015, p.2).

It is also important to note that female political participation and representation cannot be reduced to a simple 'numbers game'. Thus, it is also essential to emphasise that the participation not only needs to be equal, but it must be meaningful. Equating equal numbers with political empowerment may lead to the problem of 'tyranny of participation, whereby turning up is defined as empowerment, and the social, cultural and structural barriers to meaningful empowerment are neither acknowledged nor addressed' (Lau et al. 2021, p. 189). In other words, women must not only be present in climate negotiations and policymaking processes, but they must also be able to voice their demands. Climate policy processes must therefore go beyond numerical representation of women in creating active mechanisms to express opinions, take initiatives and influence decision (Huyer, 2016, p.3). This is part of a larger feminist debate, on substantial vs. descriptive representation. The theoretical framework will further elaborate on the distinction between these two types of representation.

## **2.2 Climate Change Action: Mitigation and Adaptation**

As stated previously in the introduction, climate change action is characterised by mitigation and adaptation efforts. Mitigation and adaptation are the two processes and strategies that are the most frequently discussed in regard to the climate crisis. The literature on gender and climate action is thus largely centred on these two processes.

### *Mitigation*

Mitigation is perhaps the strategy that has been discussed most frequently. The Paris Agreement, the UN sustainable development goals (SDG) goals and other international frameworks that address climate change, set highly ambitious targets for environmental, economic, and social progress, in which mitigation policies play an important role. Climate change mitigation can be defined as the reducing of emissions and the stabilization of the existing levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (NASA, 2022). It aims to prevent any further climatic changes, ‘through the promotion of sustainable energy systems, the reduction of energy use, and enhancement of carbon-capturing capacities’ (Dankelman and Naidu, 2020, p. 451).

Mitigation as a strategy in tackling climate change occurs on the global level, but also increasingly on the local level. Local governments increasingly develop policies to tackle climate change and implement new programs (Sharp, Daley and Lynch, 2010, p. 434). Mitigation is a major component of the global climate response, but the efforts to integrate gender into mitigation policies have been limited (IEED, 2015). Some of the literature on climate change mitigation and gender, are in-depth studies on the action areas of mitigation, such as transport systems or urban planning (Röhr, 2018, p. 3). In various areas of mitigation, women have proven their ability to be valuable actors (Sasvari, 2010, p.2). Nnoko-Mewanu, Téllez-Chávez and Rall identify one of these areas as protecting terrestrial carbon sinks, such as forests and peatlands, amongst the most effective and important mitigation actions government can take (2021, p. 368). However, as women are underrepresented in these policymaking arenas, it has been emphasised that this is one of the reasons why gender issues have not been integrated into these policies. Hence, it is evident that ‘translating these international commitments into national actions requires projects and policies that directly value women’s approach to managing natural resources (Zusman, Lee, Rojas and Adams, 2016, p. 3).

Another important aspect to consider is that women's ability to participate in mitigation efforts, decision-making and activities is directly dependent on their control and access to financial tools, social and economic resources (Sasvari, 2010, p.2). Mitigation processes 'often neglect social and gender dimensions, with increasing inequalities and suffering as a result' (Dankelman and Naidu, 2020, p. 453). Previous studies on mitigation and gender, have also established that women's attitude towards climate mitigation solutions differ from men and that women are more supportive of radical climate mitigation policies, for instance product bans or other economic incentives (Svendsen et al. 2021, p.2). Nevertheless, the emphasis remains on women as 'vulnerable populations', rather than on supporting women to actively address and participate in mitigation efforts (Huyer, 2016, p.3). This can be exemplified by the Paris Agreement, where the mention of 'gender-responsive' is referring to the vulnerability of women (Article 7.3) , and as victims of climate change in need of capacity building support (Article 11.2) and thus, it fails to consider women's capabilities for mitigation solutions (Huyer, 2016, p.3). Therefore, the literature reveals that there is a need to shift the focus away from women's vulnerability to recognise the importance of the gendered dimensions in mitigation, and to promote and advocate for women's voices in mitigation planning and actions (Dankelman and Naidu, 2020, p. 453).

### *Adaptation*

Another important element of climate action is adaptation, where adaptation is defined as 'the adjustment in ecological, social or economic systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli and their effects or impacts' (United Nations Climate Change, 2022).

Adaptation is crucial to build more climate resilient communities and cities. It thus depends on the engagement of stakeholders on the local, national, and international level. The literature search on adaptation and gender affirms that the majority of the existing research is concerned with adaptation efforts in the global South. This can be explained by the fact that the 'determinants of adaptive capacity are directly correlated with measures of economic development' (Resurrección, 2013, p. 39). The literature has been broadened in recent years, as there is an increased focus on women as 'stakeholders' in the implementation of adaptation at all levels, and the 'need for enhancing women's capacity to act and contribute to adaptation actions' (Sasvari, 2010, p. 3).

Similarly to the research on mitigation, the studies on adaptation and gender also reveals that there are documented gender differences (also in Europe) regarding male and female behaviour and views of adaptation (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 64). For instance, a study by Andreijevic, Cuaresma, Lissner and Schleussner on gender inequality and climate resilient development emphasises importance of incorporating and assessing gender differences in policies, in order to foster climate resilient development (2020). As there are socially determined differences in opportunities, responsibilities and decision-making power, these must be addressed in the development and implementation of adaptation policies in order for these policies to be successful. In sum, the literature on climate change action exposes a gap in knowledge on how the integration of gender dimensions affects climate change policy and action, and also vice versa, how these climate change measures and policies are impacting gender relations (Röhr, 2018, p.3).

### **2.3 Gender Equality and Climate Change in Scandinavia**

The previous sections reviewed the literature on gender, climate change action and female political participation. It revealed that there is still a long way to go to integrate gender into climate policies, in the literature and in practice in developed countries. To further explore this topic, this thesis focuses on the situation in the Scandinavian countries. This particular focus was chosen due to Scandinavian countries reputation and status as countries with the highest levels of gender equality and representation in Europe (Kronsell, Rosqvist and Hiselius, 2016, p. 705). They are regularly ranked at the top of global and regional surveys on gender equality, for instance the Global Gender Gap Report or the EIGE Gender Equality Index where Norway, Sweden and Denmark countries rank in the top 10 (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). Moreover, the three countries are also considered pioneers in developing climate change policies (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2015, p. 310).

Nonetheless, research on these countries and the link between gender and climate change is underdeveloped. The Nordic Ministerial Panel of 2022 highlighted the gap in research on gender equality and climate transitions in the Nordic region. One of the points that were raised at the Nordic Ministerial Panel stressed that the ‘Nordic countries will also secure the influence of women in all aspects of climate change, from international negotiations to national policies’ (Norden.Org, 2022). The limited research available on the two issues have produced varying and interesting results. For instance, Magnusdottir and Kronsell findings conclude that policymakers in the area of climate change are largely unaware of gender differences in climate

issues and suggested further research to be conducted on this specific topic (2015, p. 308). It will therefore be interesting to further research the topic of gender blindness, particularly in states with high levels of gender equality, how and if, this translates into action. Another study on the Scandinavian countries reveals two differences between men and women. First, women are more willing to change their habits for environmental reasons than men. Second, women are actually overrepresented among environmental activists (Rustad, 2021, p.1). This is a valuable insights that illustrates the importance of further investigating the issue of gender inequality and representation in the context of climate change action. This suggests that if there were more women in decision-making positions, whether it is on a local, national or international level, they would make invaluable contributions to climate policy and action.

Research by Kronsell, Rosqvist and Hiselius found that women were well represented in decision-making positions in politics, however, in areas highly relevant to climate action such as transport sector, there is actually a gender imbalance (2016, p. 705). However, the results from a study by Magnusdottir and Kronsell showed, ‘a parity representation of female and male officials in Scandinavian climate units did not automatically result in growing gender awareness among policymakers or in policy documents’ (2015, p. 72). In summary, the literature on gender and the climate crisis in a Scandinavian context is limited, and the few studies have produced varying results. It is therefore clear that more knowledge is needed on how gender impacts climate policies and vice versa.

### *Conclusion*

To conclude this section, it can be established that the literature identifies various important connections between gender and climate change action. Although most of the research on the linkages between the response to the climate crisis and gender focuses on developing countries, there are some interesting studies on developed countries and on Scandinavia in particular. The research to date has been both qualitative and quantitative in nature, exploratory and observational. The knowledge on how climate policy and gender mutually impact each other is currently insufficient to fully inform and support gender mainstreaming (Svendsen et al. 2021, p. 11). In order to support the implementation of policies that focus on both, more data, analyses and resources must be developed and used.

### **3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

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The theoretical framework that I apply is rooted in feminist international relations (IR) theory. Feminist IR theory is the most applicable and suitable theory, as it places emphasis on power relations, women's participation and marginalization, gender regimes and power structures. Theoretical insights on female participation and gender structures from traditional feminist scholars such as Cynthia Enloe (1989), Tickner (1992), Phillips (1995) and Pettman (2004) will be applied as a point of departure for the framework. Newer theoretical concepts derived from traditional feminist theory, such as descriptive vs. substantive representation, and insights from feminist institutionalism will guide the analysis of this paper. These concepts are also used to categorise the data collected, into overarching themes.

Feminism was first associated with the environment in the 1980s, during a time where the environmental movement was growing, and after essentialism debates in the prior decade had reinforced notions of the feminine, assigning gender differences as 'innate and transcultural properties' (Resurrección, 2013, p. 34). Feminist environmentalists advocated the idea that women are closer to nature and argued that they had an inherently better understanding of environmental protection, and the domination of women had resulted in environmental destruction (Mies and Shiva, 1993; Nightingale, 2006, p. 166; Resurrección, 2013, p. 34). It can therefore be contended that applying feminist theory to the analysis will be fruitful and produce interesting insights. 'Despite differences in terminologies, feminist research brings to the fore the interconnectedness of the social, political and economic realms with the environmental in its analysis of climate risks and hazards' (Tanyag as cited in Faciolince, 2019, p.2).

#### **3.1 Where are the women?**

Feminist IR theory is largely entrenched in the critique of women's marginalization from global politics (Enloe, 1989; Pettman, 1996). In 1989, Enloe challenged the status quo of international politics by asking a simple question: where are the women? She placed the focus on the need for inclusion of women in international relations and emphasised the need to collectively organize and transform the unequal gender power relations present. The question asked by Enloe, is still relevant three decades later, as women are still underrepresented in vital decision-making bodies. Levels of female representation and participation in climate policymaking are still low, compared to their male counterparts. While men are still in a much larger degree in

general viewed as ‘protectors and agents’, both in literature and in practice (Pettman, 2004, p. 89) research is still focused on the oversimplification of women as a homogenous group of victims to the climate crisis. These theoretical insights will also further support the main concepts, in particular female political participation and representation.

Female political participation and representation, and whether it affects political outcomes has been a topic of great discussion by feminist scholars. In her 2010 article ‘Call in the women’, feminist geographer Susan Buckingham asserted that gender imbalance is a major cause for the ongoing stalemate in international efforts to restrict greenhouse gas emissions (Buckingham, 2010, p. 502).

Therefore, one of the main arguments that has developed from this debate, is the critical mass argument. The *critical mass argument* was developed by Kanter (1997) and Dahlerup (1998), and is centred around the principle that a certain number of women, a critical mass, must be present in order for their actions to actually produce a substantial effect (Dahlerup, 1988: 2006, p. 138). In other words, ‘it takes a certain number or percentage of women in politics, a critical mass, to make a difference’ (Dahlerup, 2014, p. 137). Moreover, Dahlerup asserts that the political use of critical mass theory, serves as an excellent example of the close and complex connections between gender research and gender equality policies (2014, p.138). Other branches of feminist theory offer counterarguments to the critical mass theory. For instance, post- structural feminism argues that masculine norms are deeply institutionalised within climate institutions, and as such, policymakers adapt their actions to this masculinised institutional environment (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 73). Moreover, scholars have made a distinction between *descriptive vs. substantive representation*.

The distinction between descriptive vs. substantive representation draws upon Anne Phillips’ politics of presence (1995). Phillips argues that ‘there are particular needs, interests, and concerns that arise from women's experience, and these will be inadequately addressed in a politics that is dominated by men’ (1995, p.66). Phillips emphasises that equal rights to vote does not solve this problem, equality must also exist among those elected to office (1995, p.66). Having the right to participate and representation in equal numbers does therefore not automatically result in meaningful representation. The differences between descriptive and substantive representation highlights exactly this issue. Descriptive representation has thus been referred to as the ‘compositional similarity between representatives and the represented’ and substantive representation has been referred to as the ‘congruence between representatives’

actions and the interests of the represented' (Schwindt-Bayer and Misher, 2005, p. 407). In other words, descriptive representation, in similarity with the critical mass argument, relates to the number of women and men who participate in political institutions (Wängnerud, 2009, p. 53; Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 66). While substantive representation can be explained by the simple question of whether women will make a difference once they have been included in the polity (Dahlerup, 2006 ; Mushaben 2012 ; Magnúsdóttir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 66). Lastly, this does not mean simply looking at women. It also means asking 'which women (and which men)? Which differences make a difference' (Allwood, 2020, p.5). The theoretical concepts of critical mass, descriptive vs. substantive representation highlights the need to investigate and address, where and how gender matters in relation to climate change and how to organise representation.

In addition to the main research question, the thesis will address and be guided by the following **sub-questions:**

- In states with high levels of gender equality and female political participation, is this reflected in climate policies and action?
- How do gender norms influence climate policies?
- Does gender equality strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation responses?
- How do policymakers in the area of climate change perceive gender issues, do they believe that there is a need for a gendered lens in climate policymaking?

### **3.2 Gendered Structures, Feminist Institutionalism and Power Relations**

In Tickner's work 'Gender in International Relations', she raises the question of 'what difference it makes' when gender relations are introduced into analysis of economic and environmental concerns (1992, p.5). Tickner asserts that 'until gender hierarchies are eliminated [...] I do not believe that the marginalisation of women in matters related to international politics is likely to change' (1992, p. 5). Gender hierarchies are still present in the international system today, as 'gender roles and identities are linked to gender hierarchies in terms of opportunity and participation in power structures in society' (Hemmati, 2005, p.5), which also relates to the previous point of female representation. These gender hierarchies and power structures are obstacles in climate action and planning. Hackfort and Burchart argue that efforts towards climate mitigation and adaptation must be viewed through a gendered lens, as this effort may be misdirected as long as power relations remain invisible (Hackfort and

Burchart, 2016, p.2 ) It can be argued that these power structures and relations impede progress in international climate negotiations, as national governments, business elites and international organisations are still male dominated (Nagel, 2015, p. 204).

### *Feminist Institutionalism*

In feminist theory, gender is not reduced to a simple difference in sex, but it is a power relationship which entails the ‘social and cultural practices, relations, organizations and institutions around presumed biological differences between men and women’ (Kronsell et al. 2016, p. 704). Feminist scholars thus contend that the failure of the international community to effectively respond to climate change, can be explained through gendered analysis of the institutions that dominate international climate change research, planning and negotiations (Nagel, 2015, p. 204) This school of thought has been labelled feminist institutionalism. Feminist institutionalism argues that institutions organise power inequalities through a set of formal and informal rules and practices. In other words, the construction of gender identity is intertwined with the ‘daily life and logic of institutions’ (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2016, p. 65). The feminist explanation of this lies in the notion that socioeconomic developments over the past decades were often characterised by patriarchal neoliberalism, which has exacerbated inequalities and discrimination (Dankelman and Naidu, 2020, p. 449).

Early feminist work on gender and institutions largely overlooked the role of institutional processes and practices in reinforcing and reproducing gender inequality (Witz and Savage 1992; Krook & Mackay, 2010, p. 2). The focus has thus moved from ‘gender and politics’ to ‘women into the gendering of political institutions’ which accentuates the ways in which political institutions echo, structure and augment gendered patterns of power (Kenny, 2013, p. 34). Krook and Mackay, explains that ‘the causes of gender inequality were understood to exist at the macro-level, rooted in a stratifying system or structure known as patriarchy. Institutions and organisations, therefore, were not the direct cause of inequality in, and of themselves’ (2010, p.2). Feminist scholars thus advocate for a fundamental shift in institutions and systems. This ranges from the global economy and financial systems to international climate institutions and organisations (Dankelman and Naidu, 2020, p. 450). The paper by Magnusdottir and Kronsell (2016) paper, exemplifies this demand, as they conclude masculine norms and power are so deeply institutionalised in the existing climate institutions that policy and decision-makers, regardless of their gender/sex, accept and adapt to the masculinised institutional environment in which climate policies are formed (2016, p. 73).

In the same vein, post-colonial feminism, another branch of feminism, also argues that society must recognize and accommodate the differences and singularities of individuals and groups in the subaltern<sup>1</sup> in order to develop effective strategies and produce knowledge around climate change (Santos, Holm, Olsen and Hovelsrud, 2020, p. 2). Thus, they argue that to effectively tackle global issues, such as the climate crisis, it is essential to restructure the socio-economic basis for gender, class, and ethnic divisions (Santos et al. 2020, p.2). This argument can also be connected to the tendency in literature to reinforce both gendered polarities and the North-South divides, that tends to frame women as vulnerable or virtuous (Arora-Jonsson, 2011, p. 750). Hence, it is important to note that unequal gender relations do not cause or intensify the climate crisis, however, ‘gender relations do determine how the environment is managed...It is dangerous to attribute responsibility by gender’ (Skutsch, 2002, p. 34; Arora-Jonsson, 2011, p. 750).

The focus on climate institutions is highly important as they re-produce power relations, promote norms and values, and distribute resources (Magnusdottir and Kronsell, 2021, p. 2). Although that the usefulness of feminist institutionalism has been established, there is also a growing recognition that there is a need for more innovative conceptual tools and methods in order to understand that there are no neutral institutional processes or practices, as they are all gendered (Kenny, 2007, p.91; Kenny, 2013, p. 34).

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<sup>1</sup> Term coined by Antonio Gramsci, refers to classes excluded from political hegemony by ruling elites (Salah, 2014, p. 19)

## 4. METHODS

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In this section, I present the specific methods chosen for this research, both in general and in the context of the research question. The section details the strategies guiding the analysis and justified the methods chosen for this thesis. This paper will utilize a qualitative research strategy to investigate whether/how the integration of gender dimensions impact climate change policies and action. It utilises both primary and secondary data, to explore the linkage between gender and climate change action. The primary data consists of interview data and policy documents. A qualitative approach is useful for the conduct of this research, as qualitative methods offer an effective way of better understanding a phenomenon through the experiences of those who have directly experienced or been affected by the phenomenon (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018, p. 807). This study is exploratory in nature, and as such, it intends to ‘merely explore the research questions and does not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions to existing problems’ (Business Research Methodology, 2022, p.1). As the term suggests, this type of research design is concerned with exploring a phenomenon in depth. It is employed when a research topic has not been studied extensively (or at all) in the past (Brown, 2006, p. 43).

### 4.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative analysis which combines elements of content analysis and thematic analysis. It analyses textual data, which refers to a range of different sources including books, reports, agendas, policy briefs, press releases etc. (Bowen, 2009, p. 38). Document analysis is an advantageous and useful method to analyse my research question, as the different theoretical concepts can be used to analyse the different documents in depth. Bowen explains that: ‘documents provide background and context, additional questions to be asked, supplementary data, a means of tracking change and development and verification of findings from other data sources’ (2009, p.39). This is useful for my research, as the intersection between gender equality and climate change policies is gaining more attention, and new developments are taking place. It also provides more extensive background information and context on each country, which is important as the research on the three countries might produce differing results.

Documents can also be defined as ‘social facts, which are produced, shared, and used in socially organised ways (Atkinson and Coffey, 1997, p. 47). This method of document analysis is often used as it emphasizes the ‘discovery and description, including search for underlying meanings, patterns and processes, rather than mere quantity or numerical relationships between two or more variables’ (Altheide, 2000, p. 290). This is an important factor to consider, as we have established previously, gender equality is not merely a number’s game. When taking a strictly numerical approach to the research problem, it would perhaps appear that since Norway, Sweden and Denmark, rank high on gender equality indexes and levels of female political participations are high, it could be assumed that they are truly gender equal and that this is reflected in the policies. However, the documents also provide context and illustrates interrelationships that cannot be detected using a quantitative approach only.

Moreover, I employ document analysis as it is highly fruitful to use to triangulate findings gathered from other sources. Alongside the documents, data collected from interviews and additional secondary sources will be utilized for the analysis. ‘When used in triangulation, documents can corroborate or refute, elucidate or expand on findings across other data sources, which help guard against bias’s (Frey, 2018, p.4). Document analysis is also a widespread method as the data obtained from the analysis allows researchers to produce theories and concepts that may prove helpful in grasping various political phenomena (Brink, 1993).

For the document analysis, I will review policy documents, action plans and government proposals presented in international climate forums and negotiations, regarding the development of gender equality approaches in Scandinavian countries and similarly do the same for climate policies. The timeframe that has been chosen is the post-Rio period from 1992 until 2021. This timeframe was chosen as the 1992 United Nations Conference and Development (UNCED) Earth Summit, was the first time that the advocacy of women leaders on ‘public participation’ in a climate change context, from government and civil society was presented and gained international attention (Womens Major Group, 2018, p.1). The summit adopted Agenda 21, which dedicated an entire chapter to women and sustainable development in addition to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The chapter ‘Women Towards Sustainable and Equitable Development’ (UN.ORG, Section III, Chapter 24), remains highly relevant today, and thus it will be interesting to see the progress and advancement of this agenda in policy documents, climate agreements and literature today.

This will provide a broader understanding, on how/whether the Scandinavian countries seek to integrate gender equality into climate policies, how it developed, and how or if it translates and works in practice. It is crucial to note that although documents can be highly fruitful data in analysis, it cannot be used as ‘surrogates for other kinds of data... we cannot, for instance, learn through records alone how an organization actually operates day-by – day’ (Atkinson & Coffey, 1997; 2004, p. 79) To mitigate this problem, I will triangulate the documents with interview data and secondary sources, to explore and support my concepts. More on the interview data and document selection is presented in the section on data collection.

## **4.2 Limitations**

The study has several limitations. Some of the method specific limitations have already been highlighted in the previous section. Firstly, concerning document analysis, one inherent limitation is that documents are in general not created for the purpose of research (Bowen, 2009, 31). Thus, it might be challenging to draw well-rounded conclusions without additional data from alternative qualitative or quantitative research methods. Secondly, other limitations and disadvantages concerns the interview process. Due to time-consuming nature, and the constricted time period of conducting this research, I could not interview as many candidates as initially planned. Furthermore, this method is highly dependent on the availability and time of the participants. When conducting the interviews, it is also important to acknowledge that it can cause biases and there might be incomplete information.

It is also important to note that there is a lack of relevant sexdisaggregated data for gender mainstreaming of climate policies, and thus I had to find other pieces of information and data relevant to gender and/or climate change. I thus collected and reviewed policy documents and action plans on climate change and intersecting areas such as nature and environment, transport and mobility, agriculture, and investigated whether a gender perspective was integrated in these documents. Similarly, I did the same with policy documents on gender equality and development and examined whether climate change action was highlighted in these documents. Lastly, avoiding bias when conducting research in general is challenging, as the literature search, data collection is often selective and thus it can create biased perceptions.

## 5. ANALYSIS

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### 5.1 Data Collection

The majority of the data used in this qualitative analysis are written, electronic documents collected from the official sites of the governments of the relevant countries and the official records from international organisations. All documents are publicly available sources. The documents cover the period from 1992 to 2021. They include different types of documents, ranging from policy briefs, official statements, meeting minutes, reports, and agreements. Some of the documents were originally written in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian, and thus I personally translated it into English.

When using the official government site of Norway, I first selected the filter search, and applied the filters ‘Climate and environment’ ‘Energy’ ‘Equality and Diversity’. In the Swedish case, I followed the same procedure and used the government.se website and chose the ‘documents & publications’ option. I selected the following filters: ‘Environment and Climate’, ‘Gender Equality’ and ‘Energy’. The documents search in the case of Denmark was slightly different, as all documents were in Danish. Moreover, the government documents are divided under specific governments, and I thus chose the most recent three governments, to match the timeframe from 1992-2021. I applied the filter ‘klima’ (climate), ‘miljø og natur’ (environment & nature) ‘grønn omstilling’ (green transition) and ‘ligestilling’ (equality).

<b>Norway</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Denmark</b>
<b>Norwegian climate policy Report No. 34 (2006–2007) to the Storting</b> 26/06/2007 Retrieved from: Norwegian ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>26/06</b>	<b>Towards Achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals – Report</b> 19/05/2017 Retrieved from: Ministry of Foreign Affairs In-text citation: <b>19/05</b>	<b>Denmark’s Climate Policy Objectives and Achievements 06/2005</b> Retrieved from: The Official UNFCC website, under the resources section. In-text citation: <b>06/2005</b>

<p><b>Norway's long term low-emission strategy for 2050</b> 25/11/2020 Retrieved from: The official UNFCCC website, under the resources section. In-text citation: <b>25/11</b></p>	<p><b>Sweden's Seventh national Communication on Climate Change – Report</b> 08/06/2018 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>08/06</b></p>	<p><b>The Energy Commission's Recommendations</b> 24/04/17 Retrieved from: Ministry of Energy, Supply and Climate In-text citation: <b>24/04</b></p>
<p><b>Norway's Report on Demonstrable Progress under the Kyoto Protocol</b> 20/06/2006 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>20/06</b></p>	<p><b>Sweden's draft integrated national energy and climate plan – Report</b> 17/01/2019 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>17/01</b></p>	<p><b>A framework for Danish Climate Policy</b> 10/2020 Retrieved from: EEAC.EU In-text citation: <b>10/2020</b></p>
<p><b>Meld. St. 33 (2012) – Climate change adaptation in Norway</b> 07/05/2013 Retrieved from: Ministry of Climate and Environment In-text citation: <b>07/05</b></p>	<p><b>National forestry accounting plan for Sweden- Report</b> 19/03/2019 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>19/03</b></p>	<p><b>Climate Mitigation Policy in Denmark: A Prototype for Other Countries</b> 11/11/2020 Retrieved from: The International Monetary Fund websites, under publications. In-text citation: <b>11/11</b></p>
<p><b>Building for the future. Environmental action plan for the housing and building sector 2009-2012</b> 28/09/2010 Retrieved from: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development In-text citation: <b>28/09</b></p>	<p><b>Sweden's National Action Plan for the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security 2016 – 2020</b> 10/05/2016 Retrieved from: Ministry for Foreign Affairs In-text citation: <b>10/05</b></p>	<p><b>Mobility housing and construction – creating value.</b> 03/03/2017 Retrieved from: Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing In-text citation: <b>03/03</b></p>
<p><b>Green Competitiveness – Executive Summary of report from the Norwegian Government's Expert Committee for Green Competitiveness</b> 28/10/2016 Retrieved from: Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development In-text citation: <b>28/10</b></p>	<p><b>The Swedish Climate Policy Framework</b> 26/03/2018 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>26/03</b></p>	<p><b>Denmark as a pioneer in energy and climate - Status of the green transition</b> 18/04/18 Retrieved from: Ministry of Energy, Supply and Climate In-text citation: <b>18/04</b></p>

<p><b>Regulations relating to the protection of traditional knowledge associated with genetic material</b></p> <p>25/11/2016</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Climate and Environment</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>25/11</b></p>	<p><b>The Swedish climate act</b></p> <p>27/05/2020</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>27/05</b></p>	<p>A sustainable Denmark</p> <p>01/10/2014</p> <p>Retrieved from: Regeringen<sup>2</sup></p> <p>In-text citation: <b>01/10</b></p>
<p><b>Meld. St. 29 (2016-2017) – Long-term Perspectivs on the Norwegian Economy.</b></p> <p>31/03/2017</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Finance.</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>31/03</b></p>	<p><b>Circular Economy – Strategy for the transition in Sweden</b></p> <p>23/11/2020</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Ministry of the Environment</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>23/11</b></p>	<p>Sustainable Growth</p> <p>01/08/11</p> <p>Retrieved from: Regeringen</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>01/08</b></p>
<p><b>Better growth, lower emissions – the Norwegian Government’s strategy for green competitiveness.</b></p> <p>12/10/2017.</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Climate and Environment</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>12/10</b></p>	<p><b>Summary of the Government Communication ‘Power, goals, and agency – a feminist policy’</b></p> <p>09/03/2017</p> <p>Retrieved from: Government, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>09/03</b></p>	<p><b>Gender Perspexive and Action Plan 2017</b></p> <p>28/02/2017</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Foreign affairs</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>28/02</b></p>
<p><b>Meld. St. 16 (2019-2020) New goals for Noeway’s cultural environment policy.</b></p> <p>17/04/2020</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Climate and Environment</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>17/04</b></p>	<p><b>Strategy for Sweden’s cooperation with UN Women 2018-2022</b></p> <p>12/09/2018</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of foreign Affairs</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>12/09</b></p>	<p><b>Climate Agreement on Energy and Industry 2020</b></p> <p>22/06/2020</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Climate, Energy and Supply</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>22/06</b></p>
<p><b>Meld. St. 14 (2020-2021) – Long term Perspectives on the Norwegian Economy 2021.</b></p> <p>12/02/2021</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Finance</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>12/02</b></p>	<p><b>Fact Sheet: A feminist Government</b></p> <p>07/03/2019</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Health and Social Affairs</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>07/03</b></p>	<p><b>Agreement on the green transition of Danish Agriculture<sup>3</sup></b></p> <p>04/10/21</p> <p>Retrieved from: Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries</p> <p>In-text citation: <b>04/10</b></p>

<sup>2</sup> The government website

<b>Meld. St. 20 (2020-2021) – National Transport Plan 2022-23</b> 19/03/2021 Retrieved from: Ministry of transport In-text citation: <b>19/03</b>	<b>BUDGe for Gender Equality – A Swedish tool for gender budgeting</b> 02/12/2021 Retrieved from: Ministry of Employment In-text citation: <b>02/12</b>	<b>Climate Program 2021<sup>4</sup></b> 29/09/21 Retrieved from: Climate-, energy and Ministry of Supply In-text citation: <b>29/09</b>
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**Table 1:** Document Selection

### *Interview Data*

Aside from the documents, the data was collected from two in-depth interviews with experts climate change and gender equality. Both interviews were conducted online on teams, as the participants reside in Norway and Sweden. The first participant, Julie Rødje (participant I), is the President of Spire, a Norwegian environmental and development organisation. Spire focuses on creating greater awareness, knowledge and change in Norway, and on how Norwegian climate politics is affecting the whole world. Their end goal is to ‘change politics and the unjust structures in the world’ (spireorg.no, 2022). The second participant, Jennifer Unelius (participant II), is a climate change advisor for the National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point UNFCCC, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (Swedish: Naturvårdsverket). Naturvårdsverket carries out assignments on behalf of the Swedish Government relating to the environment in Sweden, the EU and internationally.

The interviews were semi-structured, and as such, the questions were not set in order or in phrasing. However, they were guided by the research questions and the feminist concepts presented in the theoretical framework. The interviews were originally conducted and transcribed in Norwegian and Swedish, and then translated to English by me. The primary data collected from these interviews, will be categorized alongside the documents to be employed in the analysis. In the analysis, the data collected from the interviews will employ the following in-text citation: participant I and participant II.

## **5.2 Content & Thematic Analysis**

As stated in the methods section, this thesis employs document analysis, in which, elements of content and thematic analysis are combined. The next section of this chapter is thus divided into ‘themes’ or ‘sub-topics’ identified in the data, and the concepts highlighted in the theoretical framework. The indicators of arguments are defined in the theory section, and the hypothesis that the thesis is built on can therefore be confirmed if the arguments in the documents replicate and reflect the theoretical concepts from the framework. If these themes cannot be identified in the data, then the hypothesis can be rejected.

Firstly, before conducting the analysis I followed the two-stage process outlined by Bowen (2009). The first stage includes a ‘superficial’ examination of the data in order to establish the overarching categories (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). The second stage is concerned with a ‘thorough interpretation’ of the textual data, and as such it borrows elements from both content and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). In other words, the element borrowed from the content analysis is employed to organise the information deduced from the data, into relevant categories. The aspect from thematic analysis is taken from the more detailed approach, where data is evaluated and inspected, paying attention to specific passages, words, quotes relevant to the research question. Both approaches are equally important. Sorting the data into categories allows the researcher to collect similar data in the same place, which again allows the category itself to be defined and compared (Moorse, 2008, p. 727). Themes are important as it makes the researcher ask themselves ‘what is this about?’ and thus allows the researcher to tie everything together (Moorse, 2008, p.727).

The next section of this paper is dedicated to the analysis of the data and has been categorized in sub-chapters, which highlight themes that emerged from the data, the research questions and the concepts presented in the theoretical framework.

## 5.3 Analysis of Data

### I. *Where are the women? – Female representation and participation in Scandinavia*

Earlier in this thesis, it was argued that one of the reasons why there is a gap in research and lack of attention to the link between gender equality and climate change, is due to the lack of female participation and representation in policy and decision-making spheres. This was a reoccurring theme in the data. For instance: ‘political participation is an important part of making progress in this area. We must ensure women and girls participation in politics and decision-making’ (Participant I). Moreover, the data revealed that women are underrepresented in the areas relevant to climate change: ‘In the women’s commission, there is a requirement of a 50/50 gender quota. However, there is not a requirement for a 50/50 gender quota in any other delegation. Thus, a 50/50 gender quota is not required in climate delegations or meetings’ (Participant I).

‘We aren’t as gender equal in Norway as people may think. Therefore, political participation is highly important’ (Participant I). This illuminates one of the pertinent issues, as the Scandinavian countries have achieved a gender balance in the top-level politics, women are underrepresented in many of the sectors relevant to climate change, such as oil, transport, agriculture, and construction. This is highly important as the business sector is gaining more power, and ‘it is the people who profit from ‘bad decisions’ that are the ones setting the rules, and these people are in majority, men’ (Participant I).

Another important argument identified in the data points to the current systems and structures in place that enable this inequality and underrepresentation to persist. ‘It is not just about representation, but things need to change on a structural level. More women should be involved in all sectors, but the system also needs to change’ (Participant 2). The issue of women’s participation must therefore be viewed within the framework of the existing norms, attitudes, and structures.

In sum, one of the main themes that emerge from the data is the lack of participation and representation, which is also reflected in the theoretical framework. It reflects the main notion of critical mass theory. From the data, one can deduce that although the levels of female participation and representation are high in Norway, Sweden and Denmark, there is a gender imbalance in policymaking areas related to climate change. The critical mass argument offers

one explanation as to why the link between gender equality, female political representation/participation, and climate policymaking and action has been largely overlooked.

## II. *Gender blindness*

In the case of Norway, the data collected suggests that regardless of the high levels of gender equality, a gendered perspective has not been integrated into climate change policies and action until recently. The data shows a recent shift in politics and policymaking, which can be exemplified in the following excerpt:

‘In 2017, we (Spire) launched a campaign in 2017 named ‘Women’s issues are climate issues’<sup>5</sup>. It was published on the 08/03/2018, and when we launched it was difficult to talk about and connect these two issues. We got in touch with the development minister, the climate and environmental minister, and the gender equality minister at that time, and none of them were interested in the campaign. However, this year, in the fall of 2021, things have changed drastically. Many people have reached out and contacted us, ranging from politicians to climate institutions and organisations, because the linkage between gender equality and climate change is gaining more attention now. Four years ago, we got no answers, but now things are finally beginning to change’ (Participant I).

This is an interesting example, as the data shows a recent shift in politics and policymaking, which will be a point of further elaboration in the discussion section. In similarity to Norway, the data shows a gender blindness in the context of climate change action and policymaking in Denmark. Evidence from the data shows that Denmark is a pioneer in the green transition where ‘Denmark’s success in transforming into a sustainable, green society is widely recognised’ (18/04). However, the data shows no mention or evidence of a gendered approach regarding their success. The data from Norway and Denmark thus suggests that gender equality is not reflected in climate policies, as the issues of gender equality and the climate crisis are viewed and treated separately. When investigating why the connection between gender equality and climate change has not gained more attention previously, the data suggests that although they are intersecting issues, they have not been treated as such. ‘Gender equality and climate change have been viewed through separate lenses, as it seems like it has been difficult to consider them

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<sup>5</sup> In Norwegian: Kvinnekamp er klimakamp

both together. This is the case for human rights, development, climate change, and gender, where they are all intersecting issues, but often we must ‘choose’ one to focus on’ (Participant I).

The data collected on Sweden shows some evidence for a gendered approach to climate change policies and policymaking in general. Each department of the government must have a gender equality advisor. Thus, when presenting a budget, for instance, all proposals must be reviewed from a gendered perspective and possible climate impacts (Participant II). Moreover, they also strive for academic gender equality, which is interlinked with policymaking as researchers put forward important reports. The purpose is to have equal proportions of female and male researchers so that ‘gender equality is mainstreamed into all research support contributions’ (19/05). However, compared to other areas and gender equality, the focus has been relatively minor, and the group of people working on this is much smaller than in other areas. ‘We are aware of the link between gender equality and climate change; however, we are not many people working on this [...] we need more awareness around this, and more political willpower (Participant II).

This section has illuminated a second theme, gender blindness. The gender blindness in climate policymaking and action identified from the data, provides one answer to whether in states with high levels of gender equality, this is reflected in climate policies. From this data, it can be argued that regardless of the high levels of gender equality in the Scandinavian countries, this has not yet been fully reflected in the climate policies and action, and thus conscious action and efforts must be undertaken.

### *III. Power structures and priorities.*

The third theme that emerges from the data is how the current power structures do not make space for women and prioritise other values over creating progress in the areas of climate change and sustainability. ‘It is not just about representation, change needs to happen on a structural level’ (Participant II) and ‘The answer lies in the power structures, how profit, work intensity, and technological solution contribute to challenges. Human rights, equality, and justice, need to be placed higher on the agenda’ (Participant I). In other words, even if women are participating and represented in policy-and decision-making spheres, which is the case for the Scandinavian countries, this will not be reflected in action unless the system and structures in place also change.

For instance, in the case of Norway, the Norwegian government met with climate organisations, where they highlighted this issue and urged for girls and women to take up more space. But instead of urging people to take action themselves, the government must work to accommodate this, rather than placing the responsibility on them (Participant, I).

The current structures in the Scandinavian countries, similarly to most other developed countries, places economic growth and competitiveness high on the agenda. Naturvårdsverket did a study on public attitudes on climate, where the results proved that women were more aware and more willing to make changes in relation to climate change (Participant, II). It is an interesting point, which will be further elaborated on in the discussion chapter. This point was also supported by other data, for instance: ‘women are often more concerned with the environment, which is why it is important to include their perspectives in policymaking and raise questions such as ‘do we need such a high economic growth? Can we spend more energy and resources on doing it in a sustainable way?’ (Participant, I). The data collected from the policy documents also adds to this argument, as the topics of economic growth, technological development and the private sector are reoccurring in many of the documents.

On one hand, the data reveals that although there is an emphasis on economic growth, there is simultaneously a focus on sustainability and strict climate policy. For instance, ‘the private sector must secure the value creation, by transforming itself to compete in a world with much tighter climate policy’ (28/10). Another example is in the case of Denmark, where Danish economy has grown over 40 per cent since 1990, and at the same time they have managed to decrease greenhouse gases. ‘Denmark has thus shown that high growth and green ambitions can go hand in hand’ (18/04). Sweden is also aiming to follow the same path, with the overarching goal of reaching zero net emissions of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere by 2045. In order to achieve this, the government will provide business and society with the ‘long-term conditions to implement the transition needed to address the challenge of climate change’ (26/03). On the other hand however, decreasing emissions is not the sole answer to mitigating climate change, and overall production and consumption in all sectors must be decreased. ‘Studies indicate that to attain mitigation goals, reduced emissions intensity needs to be coupled with commensurate changes in consumption patterns and overall reduced per-capita consumption of livestock products, especially red meat and dairy products’ (11/11).

Another interesting point related to this was stressed by one of the participants; ‘We need to focus on how society needs to change, where everyone can live sustainably, which is not

achieved solely by the reduction of Co2 emissions, but also the general consumer patterns. Not to reinforce gender stereotypes, but women's solutions actually play an important role in this' (participant I). This viewpoint underlines the importance of women's perspectives in creating more sustainable policies and their willingness to change patterns in order to do so. Data from Sweden also disclosed that there is a link between women's economic participation and increased growth, resulting in increased resources for development (19/05). This data contributes to and draws attention to the notion that men and women make different decisions in positions of power. Feminist institutionalist theory highlights exactly this point, that the socioeconomic decisions and overall developments over the past decades have been characterised by masculine norms and power. These norms and powers are deeply entrenched in the climate institutions and decision-making spheres, and it is therefore highly important to be aware of the impacts it may have on climate policymaking and action.

#### IV. *'Climate solutions are not always synonym with technology'*

The fourth theme that arises from the data is the debate on effective climate action and solutions, where a debate on technology vs. other solutions became central. The data revealed that 'men are more supportive of technological solutions, while women are supportive of changing the system and how we are organised' (participant I). One particularly interesting example from Sweden illustrated the essence of this debate. In one of the municipalities in Sweden, one of the gender equality coordinators held a presentation where she raised a interesting point regarding transportation and emissions. She asked 'What is more effective? Is it to electrify all the buses? Or make men use public transportation in the same degree as women do?' (participant II). This point is highly interesting, as it emphasises that there is a big difference in travelling patterns between men and women. What lies behind this? Why do men not want to take public transport as much as women? This is an intriguing point, which also raises the question of masculinity and climate, and what factors, norms and stereotypes are rooted in people? This again can be linked to theoretical insights from feminist institutionalism, which argues that political institutions, which includes climate institutions, re-produce and promotes gendered patterns of power and structures.

The focus on technological solutions also becomes apparent in the data, as technology and innovation are repeating topics in numerous of the policy documents. For instance, Norway is aiming to reduce Norwegian non-ETS emissions by 40% by 2030, and in order to achieve this 'technology development and implementation of new technologies must be accelerated

(28/10). The data on technology does not overlap with the data on gender equality, as gender is not mentioned in relation to technology in any of the documents. However, the phrase ‘social’ in relation to responsibilities/constraint/planning/development of technologies, was a reoccurring theme. This will be further highlighted in the fifth and concluding theme of the analysis.

The evidence reviewed in this section accentuates the importance of other climate solutions/policies than just technological ones. It also highlights the difference between men and women, as men favour more technological solutions and women more holistic solutions to climate change. Existing research has also drawn attention to this, arguing that it would be ‘better if policies and measures that aim to mitigate climate change were based on a more holistic understanding of human perception, values, and behavioural choices’ (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009, p. 20). This would include considering the perspectives and needs of different groups in society, including women and men (Hemmati and Röhr, 2009, p.9).

#### *V. A green transition based on social responsibility*

The previous section illuminated the lack of gendered perspectives in the policy documents analysed, as gender and women were barely mentioned in the policy papers, climate action plans or proposals. However, the overarching term ‘social’ was referred to numerous times, in most of the documents. This theme is interesting, as it is interrelated with gender equality. The overarching term includes ‘social categories of difference – man, woman, ethnic group member’ (Resurrección, 2013, p.20). Thus, the inclusion of gender is a question of social justice (Sasvari, 2010, p.4).

Although gender equality was not referenced directly, other mentions include ‘green transition based on social dialogue’ (25/11) or ‘understanding of the social constraints on and instruments for introducing technology; the implementation of climate policy at national and international level’ (26/06). In other words, social integration in climate policies is presented as an important objective. Other examples include ‘climate change and social change are taking place simultaneously, and social change will influence our vulnerability to climate change, particularly in towns’ (07/05) and ‘the government must implement climate policy that: is based on scientific research and on relevant technical, social, economic and environmental considerations’ (27/05).

In light of this finding, it is also significant to mention that through the green transition, we have an opportunity to reduce inequalities (Danbolt, 2022, p. 17). However, existing research on climate institutions in industrialised states in the Global North indicate that there is a lack of knowledge among policymakers on these social differences, and how to include climate-relevant social factors into climate objectives (Buckingham and Le Masson, 2017, p. 3-5)

### *Conclusion of Analysis*

In sum, this chapter has presented the data collection, method of analysis employed in this thesis, but most importantly, it has presented five key themes that emerged from the data. The first theme that emerged was female political participation and representation, the second theme was gender blindness, the third theme presented was power structures, and the last two concerned technological vs. social solutions on climate change. Theoretical concepts from the theoretical framework was applied throughout, and generated valuable points in addition to the arguments that transpired from the data. Moreover, the results provided possible explanations and answers to the guiding research questions. In the next section, these findings will be further discussed and compared to existing research.

## 6. DISCUSSION

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This study set out to assess whether and how gender equality influences and intersects with climate action and policies in the Scandinavian countries. It was based on the assumption that gender equality would be highly integrated and visible both in policy and practice in the three countries, due to the countries ranking high on gender equality indexes and their high levels of female political participation. This section will reflect on upon the findings, using the theoretical concepts explained in the theoretical framework. Using a feminist analysis in this discussion provides possible explanations and new insights on why gender equality and female political participation must be integrated into climate policy and action. There are several interesting findings to discuss.

First and foremost, the findings do not confirm the initial assumption that the high levels of gender equality and female political representation/participation enjoyed in Scandinavia automatically means that it is reflected in climate change policies. This study found that women are underrepresented in areas relevant to climate change, such as transport, technology, but also in the private and business sector. An interesting example that illustrates this problem, was found in the case of Norway, where men are overrepresented in local nature and environment decision-making, while in climate organisations such as Spire that focuses on a holistic view of the climate crisis, young women make up the majority. It raises the question as to why this is the case, why are young women more in favour of a holistic approach to tackling the climate crisis? The Scandinavian countries have indeed achieved a gender balance in top-level politics, however, this is not necessarily reflected in all policymaking areas, including climate policy. This finding illuminates the main notion behind the theoretical concepts of descriptive vs. substantive representation and the critical mass argument. In the Scandinavian countries one could argue that there are high levels of descriptive female political representation, as it concerns the number of men and women who participate in politics. Moreover, as women are underrepresented in policymaking areas relevant to climate change, it can be argued that the critical mass argument applies. It is not enough to simply have the right to participate, but a significant number must be present in order for change to actually occur.

Furthermore, Denmark and Norway have not taken any steps towards gender mainstreaming of their climate policy documents or climate action plans, which signals a rather gender-blind approach. The Swedish Government is the only government out of the three that has

commissioned a strategy for gender mainstreaming under the Paris Agreement, which is currently under consideration. One possible explanation for the lack of focus and attention on this area, is that the Scandinavian countries have been engaged in helping other governments in integrating gender equality, rather than focusing and making progress in their own governments (participant II).

What is surprising is that the data also showed that there has been a recent shift in politics and policymaking, as the link between gender equality and the climate crisis is finally gaining attention. As mentioned in the analysis, just four years ago the interviewee did not receive a response from the different ministries or attention regarding their 2017 campaign ‘Women’s issues are climate issues’. However, in 2021, there was a sudden shift, where politicians and climate institutions started reaching out and the topic was increasingly receiving attention. This raises the question, why the sudden shift? Why has this link between gender equality and climate change not been considered relevant until recently? One explanation could be that since governments have focused on these two issues separately for a long time, they did not see the urgency in connecting these issues and tackling them together. Similarly to human rights, development, and gender, governments tend to focus on one of the issues at the time, although in reality they are intersecting challenges that could benefit from an united approach (participant I). Employing the theory of feminist institutionalism, one could offer other explanations to this shift. One factor could be that the structures, institutions and organisations are slowly changing, which has allowed for this newfound shift to take place.

Additionally, another important finding is related to how the power structures and developments over the past decades have been characterised by masculine norms, and as such the values and priorities that have been emphasised reflect this, such as economic growth and a profit-based society. Evidence from the data revealed that women are often more concerned with the environment and also willing to make changes in order to mitigate climate change. This again highlights that without a fundamental change in structures, the focus on economic growth, competitiveness and profit will continue. Another related intriguing point deduced from the data is that men are more in favour of technological solutions, while women focus on changing the system and taking a more holistic approach to solving the climate crisis. The argument that ‘climate solutions are not always synonym with technology’ (participant I) is highly important. The example illustrated by the Swedish gender equality coordinator was particularly interesting, as it underlines the significance of norms and gendered patterns. It also

raised the question of masculinity and the climate crisis, which would be an interesting area of further research. Why do men not want to take public transport to the same degree as women? Why are they less concerned about the environment and less willing to make changes in order to mitigate climate change? These are all interesting points that could be explored further.

Perhaps the most important finding overall is the lack of gendered perspectives in the policy documents that were analysed. There is a clear lack of knowledge on how to include gender in climate policymaking and action. ‘It almost seems like there lacks an understanding of how to work this topic’ (participant I). ‘It is important to have clear instructions from the governments to the agencies, on their work with gender integration’ (participant II). This result may be explained by the fact that women are underrepresented in decision-making bodies relevant to climate change. Moreover, these findings make it contentious to answer the research question on ‘*how does the integration of gender equality influence and intersect with climate change action, policy and decision-making?*’ On one hand, the findings did identify areas where gender perspectives are crucial, such as in sectors where women are underrepresented (technology, transportation, etc.). This is crucial, as these outcomes from the policies in these sectors, are the ones that impact women the most, and as such, a gender perspective is essential. Additionally, the findings proved that women are more aware of environmental and climate concerns, and they are more willing to adapt to these concerns. The integration of gender equality into climate policies is therefore highly important, as it may result in different types of policies being proposed and implemented.

‘*In states with high levels of gender equality and female political participation, is this reflected in climate policies and action?*’ One possible answer to this sub-question was provided earlier in the discussion section, where it was contended that this is not the case for the Scandinavian countries. Although Sweden have made progress on this area, it still has not been implemented. It will be intriguing to follow this development further, also due to the new shift in focus, where the connection between gender equality and climate change is actually gaining more attention. For the second sub-question: ‘*how do gender norms influence climate policies?*’ the findings also provided some interesting insights on masculinity and climate change, and how women are more willing to make changes in their life than men. On the question of ‘*does gender equality strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation responses?*’ this study found that women’s perspectives may lead to more stringent or radical climate responses. The data on public attitudes on climate change showed that women were more aware of climate change and

willing to make changes. Based on this, and the findings from existing literature on gender and climate mitigation and adaptation, one could assume that the integration of gender equality indeed could strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation responses. Existing literature by Svendsen et al. for instance, reveals that women are more supportive of radical mitigation policies such as product bans or other economic incentives (2021, p.2). *‘How do policymakers in the area of climate change perceive gender issues, do they believe that there is a need for a gendered lens in climate policymaking?’* The answer to this question was also illuminated in the data, where the results showed a gender blindness in the documents. Nevertheless, in the interview data the importance of including a gendered lens was emphasized. ‘It is becoming more important than ever, to have a gender perspective in green transitions, as these decisions can risk/contribute to more inequalities and injustices.

This study confirms that in the Scandinavian countries, women are well represented in decision-making positions in politics, however, in areas related to climate action they are underrepresented and there is actually a ‘gender blindness’ in these policy areas. This finding is consistent with that of Kronsell, Rosqvist and Hiselius, who found that there was a gender imbalance in areas relevant to climate action such as the transport sector (2016, p. 705). Moreover, there is a gap in knowledge on how gender equality can be included in climate – policymaking and action. This finding was also reported by Magnusdottir and Kronsell (2014) and Svendsen et al. (2021). It is also important to note that there are several possible sources of error in the results, and as such these data must be interpreted with caution. One of the reasons being a small sample size, caution must be applied as the findings might not be generalizable or representative. It is also possible that the results reflect a selection effect, regarding the participants chosen for the interview and the document selection.

Despite interesting findings, questions remain unanswered at present. In order to answer the research question extensively, a further investigation with a larger sample size and different methods are required. In future investigations, it might be fruitful to focus on some of the new topics raised, such as masculinity and climate change, and why these gendered norms affect our views on climate change. A more comprehensive review based on more reliable study designs is recommended. In sum, further work is required to confirm whether/how the integration of gender equality influence and intersect with climate change action, policy and decision-making.

## 7. CONCLUSION

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The aim of the present research was to examine the linkage between gender equality and climate change policy and action. This study set out to investigate and better understand whether/how the integration of gender equality and female political representation influence the outcomes of climate change action and policies. This study has shown that there is a gender blindness in climate policymaking in Scandinavia, despite the high levels of gender equality and female political participation. The findings also indicate that this blindness is due to the power structures, and that change must happen on a structural level. However, the findings also indicate that there is a shift in focus, where the intersection between gender and the climate crisis is gaining attention in research and in practice. Additionally, the findings demonstrated the debate on effective climate action and solution, where the topics of technology vs. social and holistic approaches were highlighted. Throughout the analysis and discussion of the thesis, feminist theory was applied in order to offer alternative explanations and new insights on the findings.

As the research was exploratory in nature, further research is needed to offer final and conclusive answers to the research question. Nevertheless, findings from this thesis provide fruitful avenues for future research. Particularly on the topic of the sudden shift and newfound focus on the link between gender equality and climate change policies/action, but also on the topic of masculinity and climate change. In order to successfully integrate gender equality into climate policies and action, it is not simply enough to ‘add women and stir’, one must also critically assess the current power structures in place. It is time to realise the potential of women as agents of change that can contribute to effective and alternative solutions to climate change. Climate change is the defining issue of today, and the way we tackle this challenge is crucial. The meaningful participation of women and the integration of a gendered approach to climate policies and action is essential, in order to ensure a just and sustainable future.

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## APPENDIX

<b>Norway</b>	<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Denmark</b>
<p><b>Norwegian climate policy Report No. 34 (2006–2007) to the Storting</b> 26/06/2007 Retrieved from: Norwegian ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>26/06</b></p>	<p><b>Towards Achieving the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals – Report</b> 19/05/2017 Retrieved from: Ministry of Foreign Affairs In-text citation: <b>19/05</b></p>	<p><b>Denmark’s Climate Policy Objectives and Achievements 06/2005</b> Retrieved from: The Official UNFCC website, under the resources section. In-text citation: <b>06/2005</b></p>
<p><b>Norway’s long term low-emission strategy for 2050</b> 25/11/2020 Retrieved from: The official UNFCC website, under the resources section. In-text citation: <b>25/11</b></p>	<p><b>Sweden’s Seventh national Communication on Climate Change – Report</b> 08/06/2018 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>08/06</b></p>	<p><b>The Energy Commission’s Recommendations</b> 24/04/17 Retrieved from: Ministry of Energy, Supply and Climate In-text citation: <b>24/04</b></p>
<p><b>Norway’s Report on Demonstrable Progress under the Kyoto Protocol</b> 20/06/2006 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>20/06</b></p>	<p><b>Sweden’s draft integrated national energy and climate plan – Report</b> 17/01/2019 Retrieved from: Ministry of the Environment In-text citation: <b>17/01</b></p>	<p><b>A framework for Danish Climate Policy</b> 10/2020 Retrieved from: EEAC.EU In-text citation: <b>10/2020</b></p>
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