Women in Politics. Danish and Nordic Approaches

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World Average 2015
(single or lower Houses of Parliament)

World Average: 22.4 % women

- Nordic countries: 41.3 %
- Americas: 26.8 %
- Europe (OSCE): 25.3 %
  - Sub-Saharan Africa: 22.5 %
  - Asia: 19.0 %
  - Arab countries: 17.3 % (2003: 6 %)
  - Pacific: 13.1 %
  - WWW.IPU.ORG
Different arguments for increasing women’s political representation

1. The justice argument
   - Women’s right to equal representation

2. The experience argument
   - Women’s experiences should also be represented

3. The conflict of interests argument
   - On some or many political issues women’s and men’s interests are not identical

- This were the main arguments during the suffrage campaign, and they are still used today.
Arguments, cont.

• 4. The democracy argument
  - A political system which excludes women – or other under-represented groups – cannot be considered legitimate.
  - *The Beijing Platform for Action, 1995, introduces the democracy argument*

• 5. The utility argument
  - It is inefficient for society not to use women’s talents
UN ‘Platform for Action’, Beijing 1995:

• “Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning” (Art. 183).
A new discourse by contemporary women’s movements

• European Women’s Lobby under the slogan ‘No Modern European Democracy without Gender Equality’. 2008 campaign

• “The current under-representation of women in most elected assemblies in Europe, including in the European Parliament, is a serious democratic deficit threatening the legitimacy of European institutions and political parties”. (www.womenslobby.org).
African Union, Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality 2007

• **Ensure** the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace process including the prevention, resolution, management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN Resolution 1325 (2000)
Nordic exceptionalism?

• High political representation of women since the 1970s

• An extended welfare state: public dare care for children, elderly care, free schools and university, free hospitals
Trajectories in old democracies

- Passing various numerical thresholds –
- % women in parliament (single or lower houses)

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<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suffrage</strong></td>
<td>10 %</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden: 1921</td>
<td>1953</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>1994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark: 1918</td>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1984</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany: 1918</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>never</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK 1918/28</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>never</td>
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Women among candidates and elected to the Danish parliament in %, 1918-2011

Valgt til Landstinget (%)

Valgt til Folketinget (%)

Opstillede til Folketinget (%)

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Breaking Male Dominance in Old Democracies – a 4-stage model

- Male monopoly < 10%
- Small minority 10-25%
- Take-off stage: 25-40%
- 40-60% Close to gender balance

- The obligatory women
- Women accepted in social policy niche
- Active measures to recruit women
- Institutionalized parity or gender neutrality
Successful strategies

• **Co-operation between:**
  – Women’s sections in the political parties,
    the independent women’s movements and women politicians

• **System knowledge**

• Learning how the nomination system works

• Demand 50 % women in the nomination comittees!
Successful strategies

• Making gender equality a matter for the whole party, not just for women’s sections

• Including gender equality in the program of the political parties and government policies and programs.
Feminism?

• In Sweden, the majority of the political parties has since the 1990s called themselves ‘feminist’.

• The present Red-Green Swedish government presents itself as a ’feminist government’ and its foreign policy as a ’feminist foreign policy’.

• In Denmark, feminism is not a popular term
The diagnosis

• Why are women under-represented?

• *The diagnosis is important for the strategy*

• Shift from focus on women’s (lack) of qualification, to the political institutions’ lack of inclusiveness
Who decides?

• When the voters enter the polling station, the candidates have already been selected

• The political parties are the gatekeepers to elected positions

• The nomination takes place in ’the secret garden of nominations’
Open up the secret garden of nomination

• Make the nomination process more transparent and more formalized

• Put pressure on the political parties to be more inclusive (women, minorities)

• Electoral gender quotas force the political parties to look more seriously for women candidates
Top of the world rank order 1997

- 1. Sweden 40.4%
- 2. Norway 39.4%
- 3. Finland 33.5%
- 4. Denmark 33.0%
- 5. The Netherlands 31.3%

*The only five countries with over 30 % women in parliament in 1997*
World competition

• For a very long time the Nordic countries and the Netherlands were alone at the top of the world rank order on women’s representation

• *That is no longer the case*
Incremental vs fast track model

Incremental track models versus fast track models

*Why Scandinavia is no longer the only model?*

Today, many countries are using the fast track model, for instance Rwanda, Argentina, Belgium by the use of electoral gender quotas by law, binding for all political parties.
### Women in Parliament
#### Top ranking countries in 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Women in parliament, percentage (election year)</th>
<th>Qoutas</th>
<th>Election system</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Rwanda</td>
<td>64.0 (2013)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Cuba</td>
<td>48.9 (2013)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>One party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sweden</td>
<td>43.5 (2014)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Senegal</td>
<td>42.7 (2012)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Finland</td>
<td>41.5 (2015)</td>
<td>No Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Ecuador</td>
<td>41.6 (2013)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Namibia</td>
<td>41.3 (2014)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Nicaragua</td>
<td>40.2 (2011)</td>
<td>Quotas by law</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Iceland</td>
<td>39.7 (2013)</td>
<td>Party Quotas</td>
<td>PR</td>
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<td>13. Denmark</td>
<td>39.0 (2011)</td>
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*Election day figures for 42 countries over 30% women in their parliament (lower or single house)*
Electoral Gender Quotas

• 86 countries have introduced electoral gender quotas in their constitution or electoral law (ex. Rwanda, Belgium, Bolivia).

• In around 30 other countries some political parties make use of voluntary party quotas for their electoral list (ex. Sweden, Norway, Iceland)

• A first global overview:

• The global web site: www.quotaproject.org
• Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas, 2014. International Idea, the Inter-parliamentary Union and Stockholm University.
Three main types of gender quotas in politics

• 1. *Party quotas*, adopted by individual parties in a country (% of women/each gender among the candidates)

• 2. *Candidate quotas by law*, binding for all parties (% of the candidates)

• 3. *Reserved seat* quotas by law (number of those elected)
Bhutan

- Even some women’s organizations blamed women for the low representation of women ("women do not vote for women")

- But in ¾ of the constituencies, there were no female candidates to votes for!
Types of reserved seats (with election)

1. Special election among women candidates only (voters have two votes – or more). Uganda, Rwanda, Morocco, Egypt 2010)

2. ’Best looser systems’
   2.1. Elected men are replaced by non-elected women with the highest votes (Kosovo, Iraq)
   2.1. Some non-elected women with the highest votes are added to the assembly (Jordan, Palestine local)
The Paradox of Quota Adoption

• Gender quotas for elections are only about the numerical representation.

• But feminists, who support gender quotas, want women to make a difference in politics,

• While male dominated parliaments have passed quota laws based on mixed motives.