



# Creators of Change

A comparative analysis on the collaborative network of the feminist triangle in Iceland and the Netherlands and their contribution to the developments of gender equality policies.

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## **Abstract**

Gender equality is currently a hot topic in international policymaking. Since the UN's Decade for Women (1976-1985) several countries have integrated gender equality as one of their goals in governance. In recent studies, gender equality policies in global governance are criticised for being insufficient in improving the lives of women (Ellerby 2017). Governments are according to Ellerby (2017) taking 'shortcuts to change' because they only focus on adding women without challenging gendered structures. Although Ellerby calls for more intersectional gender equality policies, she does not present concrete solutions. After evaluating numerous theories on gender equality policies I realised that the solution may lie within a collaborative network of people that work in the government, academia and women's movement. The hypothesis that can be drawn from the theoretical discussion of Gouws (1996), Woodward (2003), Verloo and Lombardo (2007), Holli (2008), Outshoorn and Kantola (2007), and Findlay (2015) is that the creators in this triangle can improve gender equality policies through an active collaboration and gendered awareness inside and outside of the government. From this point, I decided to focus on the people that create the gender equality policies and see how they contribute to the development of these policies. I selected two western liberal welfare countries for a comparison: Iceland and the Netherlands. Iceland is known for excelling in gender equality according to international measurements whilst the Netherlands is dropping. By interviewing the people working and advising on gender equality policies (22 in Iceland and 11 in the Netherlands), I contribute to answering the question on how gender equality policies can become more intersectional and sustainable through a collaborative network of people. This research shows another angle of policy making, namely the experiences, aspirations, and expertise of the 'creators of change'.

## Preface

As a woman with both an Icelandic and Dutch nationality, this research is of particular interest to my personal and academic life. I have lived in both countries and been a part of their communities. I was brought up to be someone who seeks justice and righteousness for those who are wronged: a feminist. From a young age, I knew I wanted to use the privilege I had to help others. Although I have always been drawn to international developments of the position of women in the world, the question of why the position of women in Netherlands and Iceland differ so much has always stuck with me. It was not until I had the pleasure of being an intern at the Ministry of Welfare in Iceland that I knew how I wanted to contribute to gender equality by improving these policies and legislation. Today, the efforts of challenging the structures of governing and policy-making in terms of the securing intersectional gender equality have, to some extent, been realized.

The most interesting observation I want to reflect on, is the different ways in which I was welcomed as a researcher on this topic in Iceland versus the Netherlands. In Iceland, it was fairly easy to approach people within and outside of the government concerning my research. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, there was more resistance towards participating in this research. I am certainly grateful to the people who did welcome me with open arms, but I was rejected or did not get a response in four out of five requests on average in the Netherlands. What this may indicate is a difference in emphasis on the issue of gender equality between these countries. The way I experience the atmosphere for gender equality resembles the difference in emphasis expressed above. In the Netherlands, there is a general assumption of gender equality already being achieved. In Iceland, the country which has been praised for having already achieved gender equality, there is an ongoing movement towards improvement. Although this may give away some of the conclusions of the thesis, this is how I experienced my time in both Iceland and the Netherlands, having lived fourteen years in Iceland and fourteen in the Netherlands.

This project could not have been realized without my support system who deserves special acknowledgments. I want to thank my partner, parents, siblings, friends, and colleagues who have helped me with intellectual, technical and personal struggles throughout this process. Next, all my respondents and informants in Iceland and in the Netherlands deserve my gratitude for sharing their time and experiences with me. Last but not least, my supervisors Berteke Waaldijk and Joyce Outshoorn deserve praise for guiding and challenging me academically. Thank you all.

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Word count: 39.187<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This is the total amount of words excluding the original quotes in the footnotes (10.613 words).

## Introduction

Throughout the years, gender equality has become a trend in global governance. This can be traced to when the United Nations (UN) declared 1975 International Women's Year. Since then governments around the world have felt more compelled to declare their commitment to gender equality, generally defined as the equal status of men and women (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel 2013: 1). Countries such as Iceland and the Netherlands have since then increased their interest in promoting *women* in governments, protecting *women* from violence and ensuring *women's* economic rights. What these innovations or policies have in common, is the focus on the improvement of women's position and their inclusion to political, economic and social spheres. In spite of the focus on women, these policies are still framed as pursuing 'gender equality' and have been criticized by Ellerby, to be 'shortcuts to change'. With a 'shortcut', Ellerby (2017) argues that the terms *gender* and *women* are conflated, a problem because it simplifies gender to only one aspect: namely women, instead of challenging the fundamental constructions of gendered institutions. Gender, according to Ellerby (2017), to which I correspond in my thesis, is a more complex concept that deals with the norms of femininity and masculinity and how power relations affect people's lives through the normalized gendered roles within societies. Ellerby criticises state policies for their lack of intersectionality, by simply adding women<sup>2</sup>. She does however not indicate how these policies can be adapted to achieve this. It is not enough to demand change, one must also take action, but how?

Research on gender equality policies (Gouw 1996; Vargas and Wieringa 1998; Woodward 2003; Verloo and Lombardo 2007; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Holli 2008 and Findlay 2015) indicate that the policies are most successful through collaboration between people that work in the fields of government, women's movement and academia forming a triangular network. With this in mind, it became clear that the people working and advising on gender equality policies may be the answer to more sustainable and inclusive gender equality policies. By interviewing people working in the triangular network in Iceland and the Netherlands I investigate whether there is a cooperation between the triangular entities and how they can advance change. I examine whether they embody the knowledge and experience to advance the gender equality policies to be more intersectional. I also look into which factors they believe influence the policies and their position.

I examine the cases of Iceland and the Netherlands and compare how a triangular network in both countries can advance gender equality policies. To clarify, this research is not a policy assessment research to which improvements are provided in the results. As much as such research is useful and important in the progression of gender equality policies, my focus is primarily on the people that create the policies, and which factors influence the people involved in the making of such policies. I address this through the perception of feminism by the people that work and advise on gender equality policies and legislation such as policymakers, members of parliament/government, civil society and academics,

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<sup>2</sup> A singular category of elite women, which will become clearer later in the analysis in the debate on intersectionality.

hereafter known as ‘creators’<sup>3</sup>. Their ideas of incorporating (intersectional) feminism into policies is also examined because it gives a clearer idea of the political will to pursue gender equality. This research discusses the topics in which these countries differ in gender equality from the perspective of the creators in a triangular organization of the government, women’s organisations and academia forming a ‘feminist triangle’<sup>4</sup> (Holli 2008). In short, this research considers how they contribute in making the gender equality policies more intersectional and sustainable which may serve as an answer to the claim Ellerby (2017) makes for more sufficient inclusive policies.

### ***Research questions***

The main research question of this thesis is: *How do the creators of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands contribute to the sustainability and intersectionality of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*

The sub-questions are: *Is there a cooperative triangular network among the creators working and advising on gender equality policies in both countries and if so, how do they operate? How do the creators frame gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands? To what extent do the creators advance intersectional approaches in the gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*

With these questions, I contribute to the acknowledgment of the importance of looking beyond the criticism of the policies and towards the people behind the policies and how they can advance the policies to be more inclusive and sustainable. For what are policies but human creations? The approach of interpreting policies as a human creation, which can be changed by people working and advising on those policies, is threaded throughout the analysis. The first subquestion reflects on the sustainability of gender equality policies by examining how policies are maintained through a collaborative network. The other two subquestions are based on the criticism on the lack of intersectionality of the policies. The former reflects on how the creators frame gender equality policies while the latter explores to what extent they advance for more intersectional policies.

In the first two chapters, I describe the theoretical frame of the sustainability of gender equality policies and methods used in this thesis. The third chapter discusses the different policies and legislation in both countries and the organization thereof in practice. The fourth chapter is devoted to the sustainability of gender equality policies from the perspective of the creators. This is further divided into the conceptualization of the creators, the environment in which gender equality policies thrive according to them, and their thoughts on the role of the feminist triangle and their visions of improvement. The thesis ends with a conclusion where the research questions are answered.

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘creators’ is elaborated upon in the methodological section on page 19.

<sup>4</sup> The definition of the feminist triangle can be found in the methodological section on page 11.



# Chapter 1

## Theoretical framework

For this thesis, I use an intersectional feminist framework to examine how the creators can contribute to the sustainability of the gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands. There are several authors that have been taken into consideration for the sustainability of gender equality policies: Verloo and Lombardo (2007) describe the different meanings of gender equality and the effects those have on gender equality policies in Europe. Their work is mostly drawn on the notion of diversity and intersectionality, a term coined by Crenshaw (1989), who discusses the multiple axes of discrimination. An issue which Ellerby (2017) later articulates in her own analysis of women-centered gender equality policies. Gouws (1996), is not as outspokenly concerned with intersectionality as the previous authors but introduces the shift of the feminist demands from the women's movements positioned from outside of government, to the inside of the bureaucracy as femocrats or feminist bureaucrats. Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) concern themselves with the importance of incorporating the demands from the women's movements into the governmental agenda through a systematic collaborative network. Verloo and Lombardo (2007) argue for the need of gender expertise as one of the key issues for the progression of gender equality policies. Next to that, the organisation of the network needs to be run with a gendered lens for the feminist agenda to be successful in gender equality policies according to Findlay (2015). What all these scholars have in common is the notion of a collaborative network within gender equality policies for them to prevail. For that I have turned to Holli (2008) who speaks of a collaborating network between academics, femocrats and the women's movement called the 'feminist triangle'. A collaborative network has, according to Woodward (2003) the strength to advance social transitions by the embodied experiences and expertise of this network. More specifically, the feminist triangle is a subset of women's cooperation constellation sharing epistemological commitments according to Holli (2008). Holli (2008: 169) builds her triangle on the concepts of 'the strategic partnerships' (Halsaa 1991), 'the triangle of empowerment' (Vargas and Wieringa 1998), and 'the velvet triangle' (Woodward 2003). All these theories can be placed in the feminist spectrum. With spectrum, I refer to the feminist theory and activism. It is therefore important to realize what kind of feminism is active or visible in both countries of analysis. This is where I consult the theories of McRobbie (2009) on post-feminism. McRobbie argues that the reason why gender equality is not achieved in societies is that there is a general rhetoric of disarticulation of the collective efforts towards change which may prove to be present in the countries of analysis. By examining the theories presented by these scholars, it becomes clear that the sustainability of gender equality policies relies on the people working and advising on these policies and how they conceptualise and work towards gender equality and social change through policies. Therefore, the focus is on the creators of change and their contribution to more inclusive policies.

### *Theoretical debate on gender equality policies*

Even though the theories on the development of the gender equality policies can be confirmed by further analysis of case studies, it is equally important to review what has been written on the gender equality policies themselves. As this is a theoretical section, I do not address the general policies themselves, but how feminist scholars debate on the issues regarding gender equality and the policies to secure it. Next to that, a clear definition of the term gender equality is needed as well as an explanation of how gender equality is used in this thesis. The meaning of gender equality policies is argued to be contested within feminist theory according to Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo (2009) because the meaning of gender equality can be altered to fit the needs of the policymakers. Gender equality is in this sense shaped by certain processes to ‘fix’, ‘shrink’, ‘stretch’ and ‘bend’ to the acquired situation of the policies in question. For example, gender has been ‘shrunk’ in the legal sense to mean only women, ‘fixed’ in numerical terms through gender quotas and ‘bent’ towards other goals such as economic growth in the form of increasing participation of women (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009: 3).

The general understanding of gender equality is framed, or one might argue limited, within the gendered binary of men and women (EIGE 2017: 3). In this framework, gender equality is achieved when men and women enjoy the same opportunities and rights across all sectors of society, including economic/political participation and decision-making and that their different behaviors, aspirations, and needs are equally valued. Verloo and Lombardo (2007) contribute to the discussion and argue that gender equality can be conceptualized in three different ways: “as a problem of achieving equality as *sameness* (this is linked to the strategy of equal opportunities), or of affirming *difference* from the male norm (positive actions fit with this approach, although they are not limited to it), or of *transforming* all established norms and standards of what is/should be female and male (gender mainstreaming has been considered as a strategy suitable to achieve this)” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 23, emphasis added). These visions can mean forms of inclusion, reversal or displacement, points to which policies are built upon elaborated upon in the section called *feminist strategies*. When it comes to studying gender equality policies in this regard, Verloo and Lombardo state that it should be analyzed through “clusters of contesting views on addressing the gender problematic” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 22). These contested views of gender that Verloo and Lombardo (2007) speak of are addressed to further extent in the general debate on gender equality policies.

The general debate on gender equality policies, the policies are presented as “a technical process that politicians and bureaucrats should carry out, occasionally with the consultation of gender experts” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 26). The problem with the technocratization of gender equality may result in the loss of political conflict, simplification, and exclusion because of the lack of (political) will to consult the gender experts (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 26). Here they show the possible results of the contested views of the gender equality policies. To put it in perspective with my own analysis, the intersectional categories are often excluded from the gender equality policies as it is seen as complicating the policies by the decision makers, often residing in the lack of intersectionality in gender equality policies.

## **Debate on intersectionality**

The term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989). She makes a distinction between two kinds of intersectionalities: structural and political (Crenshaw 1991: 1245). The former is when inequalities and their intersections are relevant at the level of experiences in society. There are multiple axes of discrimination, bound to the idea that people have overlapping experiences of class, race, gender, identity, sexual orientation, ability, nationality, religious affiliation, and age. The latter, political intersectionality refers to the phenomenon when policies target the only axis of inequality, which are not neutral towards other inequalities. In the case of this particular analysis I refer to the political axis of gender in the equality policies (Crenshaw 1991: 1245). I highlight these intersectional perspectives as they are important to consider whilst analyzing the perspectives of current gender equality policies, and question who is included and to whom it refers. Kara Ellerby (2017) is one of the political science authors in which I draw upon in regard to this point.

Ellerby (2017) uses Crenshaw's (1991) idea of intersectionality for she highlights the need for critical engagement with gender equality policies. In her recent book Ellerby (2017) states that "a critical feminist definition of equality would also centralize oppression's multiple faces, of which gender is only one face: one that centers issues of race and ethnicity, (neo) imperialism, class, and sexuality in efforts to dismantle rigid kyriarchical structures upon which neoliberal capitalist order relies" (Ellerby 2017: 13). In other words, women can have multifaceted intersecting experiences which all play a part in their existence and place in society. Ellerby (2017) highlights that the lack of intersectionality leaves the poor women and colored women, who seem to be excluded from the policies, in a limited position towards political power and resources. These women-centered policies are, therefore, according to Ellerby (2017), framed for the elite white women as the policies are shaped for their realities, such as economic gain (Ellerby 2017: 189). Interestingly, this touches upon the issue I want to address, namely the focus on women as a singular and homogeneous category in current international gender equality policies and understanding gender equality from a critical feminist approach. For her analysis, Ellerby (2017) uses "interlocking structures of domination" (2017: 6) to be able to engage with social structures that promote domination through multiple intersecting systems of oppression. Imperialistic systems of subordination are one of such structures of domination according to Ellerby (2017). These systems have a hierarchical structure as a foundation framed by the ideology of modernity (Lugones 2010).

In slightly different ways, Lugones (2010) and Mohanty ([1986] 2002) discuss the inequalities that derive from the ideology of modernity. Furthermore, they explain how modernity is framed by the countries in the Global North, more specifically the Western-European countries. Lugones (2010) stresses that "modernity organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories" (2010: 742). Countries are put into hierarchical categories in which one is more modern than the other, according to Western standards. Mohanty ([1986] 2002) criticizes the universality of these Eurocentric standards and categorization and discusses how the Global North/ Global South is used to identify the privileged Western countries with capital from the marginalized poor in the South. In other words, the quality of life in each country distinguishes the nation's status in this hierarchical

categorization. During the ages of colonial rule, the Global North distinguished themselves as far superior and more modern than their colonies. In relation to this thesis, this will prove to be relevant to the location of the Netherlands as a colonial empire in the fourth chapter.

I refer to these authors for their criticism of the centrality and intersectionality of gender equality policies from a critical feminist approach. Through that approach, I can determine if and how the Icelandic and the Dutch creators frame the gender equality policies and whether they comprehend with the critical notion of intersectionality. Another aspect of the sustainability of the gender equality policies is not only *for* who it is created but *by* whom? Which leads to the second debate on gender equality, the expertise and the voices in the field.

### **Debate on the creators of the gender equality policies**

As noted by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay (2015) gender expertise is important for the progression of gender equality policies. Policy makers need to be informed by gendered knowledge because “policy actors who share a higher gender awareness are more likely to effectively implement gender equality policies” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 26). A higher gender awareness means according to them being in the possession of the knowledge of the inequalities that may be inflicted upon a person based on gender or other intersecting factors. Similar to Verloo and Lombardo’s (2007) argument, Gouws (1996) has a term for the individuals that possess the gender awareness to actualize the importance of gender equality within the bureaucracy: femocrats. Femocrats are defined as women that reshape and influence feminist issues within the bureaucratic system (1996: 32). The term ‘femocrat’ derives from the 90’s in Australia and is according to Gouws (1996) an essential entity needed for the progression of the feminist agenda within the bureaucracy. In my current research, I examine the expertise and gender awareness of the femocrats in Netherlands and Iceland and whether this affects the developments and outcomes of the gender equality policies in both countries. Apart from that aspect, I broaden the scope of the femocrat by including men as well, for everyone can be a feminist, regardless of their sex or gender.

The femocrat is according to Gouws (1996) an institutionalized body (inside government), which came from the feminist movement (outside of government). This non-state form is believed by Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) and Findlay (2015) to be a crucial element for the gender equality policies to work effectively. Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) argue that there needs to be a collaboration between the government officials and the social/women’s movements, to advance in the gender equality policies. According to them, the women’s movements’ demands need to be realized for the effectiveness of the policies (2007: 1). These demands can be put forth by either femocrats or other agents from the women’s movement or academia, in this thesis known as the feminist triangle.

### ***The conceptualization of the feminist triangle***

Anne Maria Holli (2008) introduced the concept of the *feminist triangle* in an article on the conceptualizations of women's cooperation. Holli points out the "unquestioned assumptions, misrepresentations, and gaps in knowledge" (2008: 169) in comparative studies such as my own. In my research, the feminist triangle, as described by Holli, is applied to the analysis in order to situate the position of the creators. Holli (2008) gives an overview of the concepts of which the feminist triangle consists to come to a wider understanding of women's cooperation. The feminist triangle is a subset of women's cooperation constellation which consists of three concepts: strategic partnerships described by Halsaa (1991), the triangle of empowerment discussed by Vargas and Wieringa (1998), and the velvet triangle introduced by Woodward (2003) (Holli 2008: 169). These concepts all share a triangular geometry as well as theoretical and epistemological commitments according to Holli (2008: 169).

As for the origins of the triangular network, Outshoorn (1997), Woodward (2003) and Holli (2008) all refer to the idea of a triangle in informal governance which can be traced back to the 'iron triangle'. The 'iron triangle' is modelled by Theodore Lowi (1969) where interest groups influence the self-regulating domains of policymaking. This framework is described by Holli (2008) as having a strong sense of control by a restricted number of actors in arrangements concerning the military and transportation for example. Holli questions why feminists are so attached to the triangular geometry to which she answers: "[...] the attachment to triangular configurations serves two functions. It simultaneously borrows power from 'iron triangles' and it posits the feminist conceptualization in question outside this kind of male, stable, centralized power constellations, as alternative kinds of power" (2008: 177). This is something worth considering in the feminist triangle where I borrow their power to transform into my own analysis.

Strategic partnerships were introduced by Halsaa (1991) as a co-operation between Norwegian party members, women bureaucrats and the women's movement. The success of the women-friendly policies in Norway in the 90's was argued to be based on the collaboration between these actors. The feminist agenda was divided into different roles amongst those actors. According to Halsaa (1991), the women's movement served as critical voices from society. The female party members aggregated the demands made by the women's movement into the governmental channels of decision making and the female bureaucrats worked on the implementations of public policy concerning women (Holli 2008). Next to that, there was a partnership with the academic field which served as gender experts in these partnerships.

The feminist agenda is also visible in the 'triangle of empowerment' described by Vargas and Wieringa (1998). For Vargas and Wieringa "the women's movement, feminist politicians and feminist civil servants (femocrats)" are the main actors of the triangle with an emphasis on the women's movement because the movement "informs all 'corners' of the triangle" (Vargas and Wieringa 1998: 3-4). The inclusion of parliamentarians and politicians here is crucial for the progression of gender equality policies in this triangle, for they determine the outcome of a bill for example. There is however no

mention of the importance of academia directly although it may be implied that the academic knowledge can be found in the women's movement. Academia is mentioned more explicitly in Woodward's 'velvet triangle'.

The 'velvet triangle' is a network between "feminist bureaucrats, trusted academics and organized voices in the women's movement" (Woodward 2003: 77-78). The idea of Woodward's 'velvet triangle' is according to Holli (2008) "theoretically based on literature on patronage, clientelism and informal governance" which Woodward uses to emphasize the personal ties between the marginal policy arena and the interest group (Holli 2008: 173). As Woodward argues:

The velvet triangle involves actors who develop histories of mutual dependence and exchange. The parties are not usually corporate bodies. Members of the triangle are individuals present in terms of their expertise or mobilization resources, as well as those with an institutional base (Woodward 2003: 78).

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Here the 'velvet' refers to the fact that almost all the players are female in a predominantly male environment. The 'triangle' refers to the actors who come respectively from the organisations of the state, of civil society, and in this case, universities and consultancies (2003: 84).

Woodward (2003) argues that the triangle is a reflection on the operation of informal governance in social policies. Diverse voices in social policy-making could ensure a more legitimate and precise agenda, through this informal way of governance. In the excerpts above, Woodward (2003) emphasizes the need for expertise which is something that can be found in the women's movement, due to their knowledge of feminist demands. Expertise can also be found within academia where academics do extensive research on these demands and in the political fields. The last field of expertise needed in the triangle is within the bureaucratic world, where there are people who know how to operate in the political dance of policies.

In line with the arguments by Halsaa (1991), Vargas and Wieringa (1998), Woodward (2003) and Holli (2008), I am curious to see whether there is a collaborative network between governments, women's movements and academia in Iceland and the Netherlands and whether collaboration affects the status in gender equality policies in both countries. I take Holli's (2008) concern into consideration on whether feminist triangles can travel, by 'bending' or even 'stretching' the tool for the current analysis. In this sense, the exact utilization of Halsaa's (1991) 'strategic partnership', Woodward's 'velvet triangle', and Vargas and Wieringa's 'triangle of empowerment' serve as inspirations for framing the current analysis of Holli's (2008) 'feminist triangle'. I chose to use Holli's (2008) 'feminist triangles' because I apply aspects from all the concepts Holli (2008) used in her own analysis. As a network, the feminist triangle works collectively towards progressing gender equality policies according to Holli (2008) which are realized through a collective effort of feminist demands.

### ***Feminist collectivity***

“Strong watchdogs are needed to see that gender ambitions are realized” (Woodward 2003: 91). The women’s movement and civil society have here been appointed as watchdogs of gender ambitions by Woodward. The commitment toward gender equality can in that case also be tested in terms of government collaboration with women’s movements for they can, according to Outshoorn and Kantola (2007), serve as an accountability mechanism towards governments (2007: 15). If that accountability mechanism fails, chances are that the commitment towards gender equality decreases, because the ‘need to proceed’ is not as prominent as when there is someone to hold the government accountable (Hannan 2013: 82). Outshoorn (2001: 269) argues that the lack of collaboration with the women’s organization has a crucial effect on the success of the policies in the Netherlands. During the second feminist wave, women’s movements were often seen as radically left and anti-state. In recent years the radical measures have faded so they did not have much ground to work together compared to the booming movement during the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985) (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel 2013: 1). Collectivity was important when women’s movements worked together towards a shared common goal and spoke the language of liberation and women’s social change (Cox 2007: 32).

To make sense of the role of the women’s movements, one needs to consider the developments in terms of their dismantlement in recent years. In the mid-1980s, a new political ethos was on the rise (Bieling and Jäger 2009). This ethos undermined the previous dominant paradigm of collectivity, in which several nations in Europe got caught in 1990 with the rise of neoliberal hegemonic practices (Bieling and Jäger 2009: 92). This ethos is, according to Cox, based on “neo-liberal constructions of markets and competitive, self-interested individuals as opposed to social or collective futures” (Cox 2007: 33). At this point, a new rhetoric articulates a modern kind of freedom, where feminism is no longer needed. Angela McRobbie (2009) describes this period as the start of what she calls *post-feminism*. Post-feminism “[...] positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasize that it is no longer needed, it is a spent force” (McRobbie 2009: 12). Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) describe the shift in the Netherlands towards neo-liberalism and individualization as a crucial moment in which this perspective of the collectivity of the women’s movement dismantlement. At the same time, there is a disarticulation from feminism which McRobbie (2009: 26) argues to be: a force that devalues the basis of collective action which is based on the assumptions that there is no longer need for such actions.

McRobbie (2009) builds her argument on MacKinnon (1990) who argues that individual choice is what has led to the ‘post’ in feminism. MacKinnon describes the feminist movement that stood up against women’s oppression, male hegemony and gender inequality as “[...] a movement in which people understood the need to act with courage in everyday life, that feminism was not a better deal or a riskless guarantee but a discipline of a hostile reality” (MacKinnon 1990: 5). The women’s movement, MacKinnon believes, was destroyed by a new emphasis on personal choice. The freedom of choice also

enhanced the notion of an event or discrimination merely being “a regulation of a point of view” (1990: 11) meaning that certain issues are no longer collective ones, but an individual experience. Like McRobbie (2009), MacKinnon (1990) defines feminism as a collective and the liberalism as individualistic which prevents radical changes.

Due to feminisms’ dismantlement, the collective movements are disintegrated, which may affect the sustainability of the gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands. Although this development can prove negative for feminism, does not mean that the development is a one-way street. I include this development in my theoretical framework for it is an actual development within feminism, and a relevant one if one analyses the Dutch political parties’ disinterest in pursuing gender equality with special measures through feminist strategies, due to the belief among the general public and politicians that gender equality has been achieved. The dismantlement of feminism may also indicate the different use of feminist strategies and tools, elaborated upon below.

### ***Feminist strategies***

These so-called ‘feminist strategies’ were developed through theories that build on the notions of *sameness*, *difference*, and *transformation* (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 23-24, emphasis added). Verloo and Lombardo (2007) argue that the ways in which these strategies have been formed consisted of the problem of gender inequality and how it could be solved. In this section, I map the theories and the strategies and describe why they are thought to be effective for the recognition and impact of gender equality policies.

Firstly, Verloo and Lombardo (2007) speak of the vision of equality as *sameness*. The problem of *sameness* is illustrated with women’s exclusion from the political, economic and social spheres. The solution is including women into the world as it is without questioning the underlying male norms. This perspective, outlined by Verloo and Lombardo (2007: 23) can be traced to the liberal tradition of feminism, where women are projected as free agents, and when provided with the correct tools, they can achieve the same status as men. Although an interesting theory, this would in the case of this thesis be an outspoken perspective of the liberal politics which may be present in Iceland and the Netherlands. This would then resolve in a possible normalization of the ‘adding women and stirring’ approach (Ellerby 2017: 5). This approach treats women’s oppression like a recipe by integrating women into existing patriarchal structures, something many states apply in their policies of simply ‘adding women’, according to Ellerby (2017: 5).

*Difference* is described by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) as the second possible vision of equality. Here the existence of an unquestioned male norm is problematized in which women need to be recognized or be compensated for being different. The proposed solution for this problem is reconstructing politics by rethinking the differences of women and recognizing non-hegemonic gendered identities. Here, special treatment actions for establishing the criteria for employment are often applied such as quotas for positive action, often favouring women over men (Verloo and Lombardo



2007: 23). This vision can be recognized as owing up to the standards of radical or cultural feminism, for it sees women as intrinsically different from men, which can, however, be criticised for its emphasis and normalization of biological traits between men and women as argued by Ortner (1972).

Lastly, Verloo and Lombardo (2007) argue for a vision of *transformation*, something I find myself being most enthusiastic about because it contains solutions that may be associated with postmodern feminism. In this vision, the gendered world itself is problematized in where both the exclusion and the existence of the male norms are questioned. The possible solution is to move beyond the “[...] fictitious dilemma of equality versus difference by deconstructing political discourses that engender the subject and by adopting diversity politics” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 24). From this transformative vision, the tool called gender mainstreaming is conceptualized, put most simply, as a tool to incorporate gender into the mainstream of established categories and policies.

Similarly to Verloo and Lombardo (2007), Ellerby (2017) shows that the strategies have been framed as feminist strategies because of their affiliation with the demands made by the women’s movement in regard to the representation of women in politics, recognition of women’s economic rights and protection from violence. It can be questioned whether these strategies are indeed feminist at heart, but for the sake of the argument made internationally, I use the same terminology as presented in the international policies. In what follows the tools for these strategies are discussed. How the tools are used by the creators for the gender equality policies is reflected upon later in the analysis.

### ***Feminist tools – gender mainstreaming, gender quota and gender budgeting***

The available tools for the creators to implement international strategies are called gender mainstreaming, gender quotas and gender budgeting. These tools are considered by Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel to be the “most important contemporary multilateral feminist strategies [...] as they are aimed at influencing the inner workings of international organizations as well as their policy creation and output” (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel 2013: 2). Here these tools are discussed in relation to their use to advance gender equality.

The general idea of gender mainstreaming, according to Outshoorn and Kantola (2007: 15-16), is that gender equality outcomes cannot occur on the side-lines but must be addressed in the budgeting and the institutional core of mainstream policies. True gender mainstreaming is often interpreted as a process by which “[...] mainstreaming of gender equality issues would involve having a gender awareness at every step of the policy process from initial policy suggestion to evaluating outcomes” (Woodward 2003: 89). Here Woodward shows that gender awareness is important in the policy making process as one of the criteria for successful and sustainable policies and is considered in the analysis of the triangular network in Icelandic and Dutch context. Gender mainstreaming is a product of the network of academics, politicians and policy specialists in the women’s movement (Woodward 2003: 87). It was put on the agenda by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 1975 (Woodward 2003: 87). Since then, UN member states have been pressured to implement the tool of gender

mainstreaming in their policies but often without success. Hannan argues that “despite considerable efforts across the entire UN system, full implementation of gender mainstreaming has never been achieved—not in the UN itself or in any state” (Hannan 2013: 88). The reason for the lack of achievement according to Hannan (2013) are misperceptions which hinder an effective implementation. What I draw from the discussion on gender mainstreaming is that it is one of the main tools used by international agencies to ensure gender equality to which Iceland and the Netherlands are both obliged to implement after signing the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) declaration (art. 18) (UN Women 2009: np). Another strategy which is not legally binding by the CEDAW declaration, but used by some countries nonetheless, is gender budgeting.

Gender budgeting initiatives are a part of the gender mainstreaming strategies and are therefore sometimes confused with gender mainstreaming. The reason for this confusion is that gender budgeting aims at producing a budget where gender is mainstreamed, that is, looking at the gendered perspective of budget cuts and expenses for example (Stotsky 2016). Gender budgeting is an Australian invention that uses fiscal policy and/or administration to promote gender equality to which countries often apply to their own governing (Stotsky 2016: 4). During the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, gender budgeting programmes were put in the agreements of the declaration to ensure gender equality and women’s advancement objectives through this tool. According to Stotsky (2016: 6), gender budgeting is now widespread, but only a few countries have achieved substantive changes in fiscal policies or complimentary administrative machinery for the specificities of the gender perspective. Whether the Dutch and Icelandic governments have implemented this tool becomes clear in the analysis in the coming chapters.

Lastly, while gender mainstreaming tries to integrate the gender perspective systematically, a quota system is often installed by the private and/or public sector to achieve a gender balance. A quota system is an intervention for the representations of men and women within committees or higher functions. Krook (2008) argues that the quota system appeared as early as the 1930s when the quota was voluntarily adopted by political parties. However, the quota has been subject for debate within the international community (Charlesworth 2013: 30). More specifically, the legitimacy and the impact of women quotas are often questioned as well as the ethics of ‘positive discrimination’ (Britton 2000: 426). Krook (2008) shows that there is a certain reluctance towards this tool on the one hand, while articulating the success of the countries in increasing the participation of women in the public life through the tool, on the other. The perception towards quotas is either for or strictly against this strategy, placing the perceptions at both ends of the spectrum. Whether and how these tools are used by the creators is reflected upon later in the thesis.

## **Summary of chapter one**

This chapter describes the theoretical frame to which I base my analysis. According to the theories presented in the theoretical framework, the sustainability of the policies depends on the interplay between the feminists in the bureaucracy, women's movement's and academics (Halsaa 1991; Gouws 1996; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Verloo and Lombardo 2007), with the gendered expertise (Verloo and Lombardo 2007; Findlay 2015) forming a triangular network with the academic field (Halsaa 1991; Woodward 2003; Holli 2008). All these theories depend on intersecting gender with other inequalities as explained by Crenshaw (1989), later taken up by Ellerby (2017) with her criticism on who gets included in gender equality policies which often relies on the type of feminism at play in each setting (McRobbie 2009). What these theories show is the importance of examining the collaborative networks in countries securing the sustainability of gender equality policies. Who is in this network, how do they conceptualise and actualise gender equality and social change through their work and with what knowledge? This is where I turn to interviewing the people within these collaborative networks of the feminist triangle in Iceland and the Netherlands to see whether and how the creators in said triangle can possibly make the gender equality policies more sustainable and inclusive, and with which tools. Before moving to the analysis of these interviews the methods and methodology are reflected upon as well as the relevance and limitations of the research.

## Chapter 2

# Methods and Methodology

My research is a comparative case-oriented study with a feminist perspective. I operate within the Gender Studies scholarship that works towards equality and inclusion on multiple levels. Feminist scholars within Gender Studies work on a three-dimensional level: the institutional, the empirical and the symbolical level (Buikema 2017: np)<sup>5</sup>. The method is to combine all the levels in one analysis.

This research works on all levels. Firstly, it maps the policies and implementations provided in each country on an institutional level. Secondly, on the empirical level it critically reflects on the lack of intersectionality in the policies and within the feminist triangles. And lastly, the results of the research demonstrate the cultural aspects that are at play in each country on the symbolical level. These aspects are combined with anthropological/social and political sciences where societies and politics are analyzed from a feminist perspective.

The material used in the thesis derives from interviews, mapping, discourse and textual analysis. In the third chapter I map the policies/legislation and organization in both countries and analyse the Dutch and Icelandic action plans and government policies. That chapter relies on textual data from reports and other legal documents as well as information from the interviews. In the last chapter, I address the creators' perspectives, aspirations, and actions towards gender equality, which are based on the results of the face-to-face semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis.

As for the language used in the thesis, I worked with three languages: English, Icelandic, and Dutch. For practical reasons, the English translation of concepts and direct quotations are integrated into the text with the original language in brackets and/or footnotes<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Relevance***

In applied policy research, the policies are often the highlight of the analysis in which the effects of the policies are measured through quantitative analysis, such as statistical engagements (Ritchie and Spencer 1994: 173). In the past years, there has been some growth in qualitative methods for applied policy research, to which I contribute by interviewing individuals that either construct, advice or influence policy-making. I combine textual analysis with interviews by engaging with the policies from the insights of the policy advisors and people working with policies as well as mapping existing policies in both countries. This research provides insights, explanations and moreover, theories of social behaviors which can greatly affect the ways in which policies are created and for whom it is framed, and how they can be changed. I bring another dimension to Ellerby's analysis, who mainly focuses on

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<sup>5</sup> See Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 51—56, for discussion of these three sometimes conflicting manifestations of gender relations. Buikema draws on Hardings *individual, structural and symbolical* conceptualizations of gender. Altering them to the *institutional, empirical and symbolical* levels.

<sup>6</sup> In the quotes 'I' stands for interviewer and 'C' for creator.

existing historical material from the past 40 years. In her analysis Ellerby examines how gender equality has produced meaning which has been manifested into policies. My research looks at the ones behind this production, the ones creating and advising on gender equality policies. How do they produce the meaning of gender equality and which policies are manifested from these values? To come closer to answering these questions, I turned to interviews. The reason why I chose interviews as a method is the richness it brings to the analysis. I asked the creators' perceptions and importance of incorporating feminism and feminist tools to governing tactics and the possible certifications of the Icelandic or Dutch status in gender equality issues, giving another perspective of the world of policy-making. In-depth interviews are ways to access hidden knowledge and realities (Hesse-Biber 2007) and it is therefore that I add the current realities to Ellerby's (2017) material on the gender equality policies. This way I can create a greater understanding of how the creators contribute to the development of more inclusive gender equality policies.

### ***Respondents: Creators***

As mentioned in the previous section, my respondents are called 'creators'. With creator, I mean someone who either makes, influences or advices on gender equality policies. The reason why the respondents are all referred to as 'creators' is because I want to portray them on equal ground. This prevents any hierarchical distinction or implication that the one has more influence or power than the other in changing/shaping a specific policy or legislation.

I spoke with people working in the Icelandic and Dutch ministries, Icelandic governmental institutions, the Iceland city council, local Icelandic businesses, and the Dutch Second Chamber. In both countries, I was able to speak to people from academia, labour unions, business associations, and women's organizations bringing me to a total of 33 respondents (11 Dutch and 22 Icelandic)<sup>7</sup>. I have an unbalanced sample because the Dutch creators were more reluctant to speak with me when I requested an audience during my fieldwork in the Netherlands. This is elaborated upon in the *limitation* section.

The characteristics of my respondents also show a rather skewed result. I spoke to 27 women and 6 men, which incidentally says a lot about on whose shoulders the issues of gender equality fall. As the theoretical discussion shows, gender equality has been framed around women's issues, which may give women more affiliation with the topics (Ellerby 2017). This may serve as an explanation for the dynamics of the respondents. All my respondents had either a Dutch or an Icelandic nationality. This indicates the homogeneity of my sample which may also indicate the lack of diverse representations in the positions of the respondents. It is important to reflect on these individual traits because it says something about the people filling the positions in government, women's movements, and academia. Seeing that the majority of my respondents were able bodied, white-passing with higher education does

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<sup>7</sup> In both countries I conducted one double interview which I count as one interview with two respondents (Iceland: 21 interviews – 22 respondents. The Netherlands: 10 interviews – 11 respondents). This explains why the number of respondents does not correlate with the amount of interviews.

indeed shows the homogeneity of the group.

Although all creators are treated on equal grounds they all have a different position within the feminist triangle. In order to make a distinction from which positions the creators speak, I have categorized them into *femocrat creators* who work in the bureaucracy or government/parliament, *social creators* who work in the women's movement/civil society sector and/or in advisory functions within businesses<sup>8</sup>, and *academic creators* who work in academia. Through this three dimensional categorization, all corners of the feminist triangle are represented in the thesis.

### **The femocrat creators**

The government is the first corner of the feminist triangle according to Holli (2008). This includes people working in parliament and other governmental institutions. The people in these positions are often responsible for creating or directly influencing policies and legislation. In this thesis these civil servants are called femocrat creators. I spoke with twelve femocrat creators in Iceland and three femocrat creators in the Netherlands. Although there were more female femocrat creators, there were ambitious male creators amongst them. While not all the creators claimed to be feminist, their actions and perspectives can be traced to the feminist consciousness. I believe that it is not enough to openly state the affiliation with feminism, but that the choices one makes and uses in one's daily life, and in this case, the work as a *femocrat creator*, is more important than the oral expression. As for the Icelandic femocrat creators' educational background, a fair sum had a certificate in Gender Studies and/or was involved in the women's movements. Several employees have attended courses on gender at the University of Iceland or seminars on specific gender-related topics. At the Centre for Gender Equality, a governmental institution, the employees are known to be affiliated with the Gender Studies discipline and the women's movement. Among the civil servants that act as equality advisors/representatives (of which there is one positioned in each ministry), several of them also had an affiliation with the women's movement and/or a background in Gender Studies. The emphasis on gender expertise is thus valued and an important asset to have whilst working on gender equality policy in Iceland, which was not claimed to be essential in the Netherlands.

Of the 25 people working at the Directie Coördinatie Emancipatie (DCE), only a few are known to have studied the Gender Studies discipline. I also learned that the flow from the women's movement to the bureaucratic system was not evident in the Netherlands. In fact, according to the Dutch femocrat creators it is almost impossible to get into a governmental position without entering a traineeship nowadays. There is thus little to no flow from the women's movements/organizations to the ministries or other government functions. Employment policies hinder this for they need to circulate the staff

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<sup>8</sup> The advisory group applies to people that work on gender equality policies within companies and businesses. The civil society sector is thus represented by the practical experiences of the field.

between departments rather than hire externally. This often results in staff that has little to no gendered knowledge (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands).

### **The social creators**

The second corner of Holli's (2008) feminist triangle is the women's movement. The role of the women's movement in gender equality policies is to advice on the policies and their implementation. In the thesis these advisors are called social creators and come from women's movements, social organisations, labour unions and the private sector. I spoke with nine Icelandic social creators and six Dutch social creators. As mentioned above, these creators are a part of women's movements or organisations that advice on the gender equality policies.

In Iceland the organisation of gender equality policies differs slightly from that in the Netherlands. As will become clear in the third chapter, the Icelandic government made sure to involve the private sector in the implementation of gender equality policies. It is therefore that some of the Icelandic social creators work in the private sector as gender equality representatives in charge of writing and implementing gender equality action plans for their companies. The Icelandic creators I spoke to all reflected on the different status of men and women in Icelandic society. The representatives of the private sector also reflected on the unequal status of men and women in Icelandic society and their countries, confirming that they are aware of gendered differences (Verloo and Lombardo 2007).

In the Netherlands the organisation of the women's movements have become institutionalised and run on governmental funding. The Dutch women's movements are now organisations which the creators believe has changed the radical dimensions of the movements in the Netherlands. From the information obtained in the interviews on gender equality, the Dutch social creators can also be distinguished as having a gendered awareness.

### **The academic creators**

The third corner of the feminist triangle (Holli 2008) is the academia. The ones that have devoted their career towards creating the expertise on social change are called academic creators in this study. Their role is to contribute to the social change by doing research and distributing their knowledge and expertise to the ones working and advising on gender equality policies and the general public. I was only able to speak with one academic creator in Iceland and two in the Netherlands. The academic engagement in the feminist triangle is concerned with the gendered expertise through education, and the creators' involvement with social change in their countries. There was no need to question the gendered awareness and involvement of social change of the academic creators as their expertise was confirmed by their research and feminist academic engagements.

## ***Interviews***

The interviews were conducted in Icelandic, Dutch and English. In total, I conducted 31 interviews of which 21 were done in Iceland during the period between 06.11.2017 - 31.01.2018, and 10 in the Netherlands between 01.03.2018 – 04.05.2018.

As the interviews were only semi-structured, the questions did not always derive from the theoretical frame but were sometimes fabricated to the situation of the interview. The interviews themselves were recorded with a Dictaphone and transcribed accordingly. After the transcription, I coded passages and statements of the transcribed interviews into themes which included ‘traditional national traits’, ‘attitude towards government and policies’, ‘understanding of (gender) equality’, ‘most pressing gender equality issues’, ‘personal experiences with equality’, ‘intersectionality’, ‘language’, ‘culture/history/religion/politics’ and ‘colonial comparison’. With these codes I conducted a discourse analysis of the interviews. The discourse analysis provided me with the content for the fourth chapter, which deals the perspectives of the creators.

As argued by Hesse-Biber (2007) a feminist researcher offers space for the respondents to become subjects of knowledge rather than research objects, which was made possible through the transparency and the opportunity to read their transcriptions and first draft of the thesis. All the respondents gave their full consent for participating in the research and were informed of the purposes of the research itself. All the respondents have been kept anonymous and are only referred to from the position which they speak and in which country the interview took place. They were all informed of their right to read their transcription and first draft of the thesis to adjust any errors, which some of them made use of<sup>9</sup>. This way the creators are co-producers of this thesis. At the end of the process, all respondents were provided with full access to the research through a digital copy.

## ***Fieldwork***

In the summer of 2017, I was offered an intern position at the Ministry of Welfare in Iceland. During my three-month internship (06.11.2017 - 31.01.2018), I gathered both textual data and conducted interviews for my research. I was also able to sit in on conferences, political meetings, discussion panels, academic lectures and official commission meetings. From these experiences, I was able to experience the Icelandic way of governing along with academic engagements. What I learned is that there is a close link between the civil movement, academia and the governmental institution, which intrigued me. Furthermore, I had several un-official discussions with (then) co-workers about gender equality issues and listened to conversations during meetings and informal gatherings. In this way, I conducted participant observation, during my fieldwork in Iceland.

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<sup>9</sup> The Dutch femocrat creators made use of this option and informed me that their answers to the interview questions often did not reflect their own vision but the vision of the government. This is thus something to take into consideration while reading the responses of the Dutch femocrat creators.



The research period in the Netherlands subsequently lasted around three months. My fieldwork in the Netherlands had a slightly different angle than the Icelandic one. In the Netherlands, I conducted interviews, went to political debates in the Second Chamber, while also reading up on literature on Dutch politics and policies.

My work at the Ministry of Welfare in Iceland offered me many opportunities in both Iceland and in the Netherlands. During my internship, I came into contact with an assistant of a member in the Dutch parliament. They want to implement a similar policy on equal wages as the Icelandic one. I was asked to give advice on a new Equal Pay legislation, for the left-winged parliamentarians in the Dutch coalition. This meeting took place at the Dutch Second Chamber (nl. Tweede Kamer) when I returned to the Netherlands in February 2018. During the meeting, I offered my knowledge of the Icelandic legislation and informed them of the possibilities they could include the Icelandic example into their own system. In the course of a few weeks, I read the drafts and offered advice on possible changes to the concept version. Although this cannot be documented as participant observation, this was a valuable insight into the ways in which the Dutch government creates policies and can thus be considered as part of my fieldwork in the Netherlands. My position as a researcher in Iceland and the Netherlands also differed to some extent.

### ***Positionality***

There are three ways of positioning one's work, named the 'positioning triangle' (Waalwijk 23.11.2016, The Netherlands). This triangle has an individual, scholarly and institutional axis which are all interconnected. The individual axis is on a personal level and describes experiences, embodiments, and emotions. The theoretical axis is a scholarly positioning, on which concepts one uses, or in which debates one wants to participate. The last axis, institutional positioning marks the context in which one is writing. It also incorporates the material and practical things that allow certain knowledge or perspectives to be produced, which devices are used to enhance the writing (or what hinders it).

Through this positioning triangle, I have been able to situate my knowledge production in a partial perspective, a frame provided by Haraway (1988). Situated knowledge, as argued by Haraway (1988), is about self-reflection on our own identity during the research. It is also about the geopolitical, social location that the research is conducted, who collaborates within the research, which tools are being used to produce the knowledge. A feminist researcher using interviews as a method also has another aspect to be aware of in their research according to Hesse-Biber (2007). Feminist researchers are concerned with reducing the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched. A co-construction is created by breaking down the notions of power and authority invested in the role of researcher. Self-reflection is according to Hesse-Biber (2007) important to decreasing the power differentials, to which this section is devoted.

My position within my research is threefold: firstly, the individual axis is the embodiment of the homogenous category to which the ‘most privileged’ citizens in both Iceland and Netherlands fall in: white, middle/upper class, educated, able-bodied citizen. This position has helped me both find and speak to respondents with short notice because of my profile and my bilingual abilities. During the research, I was well aware of my privilege of having connections and access to people based on my privileges.

Secondly, being an intern at the Ministry of Welfare in Iceland gave me a specific ‘higher’ status. My institutional position was high in the ranks, which seemed to impress and produce certain respect due to the affiliation with the government as a ministry intern. In the Netherlands, my position was different. As I did not continue my official ministry work in the Netherlands apart from advising on a concept version of the equal wage legislation, I lost this ‘higher’ position. Remarkably, I was not received as openly in the Netherlands when I requested my audience. During my fieldwork in the Netherlands, I was refused more frequently to conduct interviews than in Iceland. More people were resentful of speaking with a student in the Netherlands than in Iceland with a ministry intern. This may or may not have something to do with my positionality.

Lastly, my theoretical position is within the critical feminist framework which I apply to my object of study, namely the perspectives on the gender equality policies in Iceland/Netherlands and their establishments. I have been able to untangle the complexity of the organization of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands through the frame that was presented in the theoretical discussion in the chapter preceding this one.

### ***Limitations***

The study is limited by the unbalanced sample. During my fieldwork in both Iceland and the Netherlands, I tried to balance the representation of my respondents. Firstly, there are not as many men working within the gender equality field as women. Women are indeed dominating this field of policies. I did, however, manage to locate men who were both willing and able to speak about their experiences and expertise on the matter. Secondly, the people I spoke with were all white, middle/upper class, educated and able-bodied people with the countries’ nationality. Again, this confirms the suspicion of who works on gender equality issues and for whom the policies are manufactured by non-intersectional means. Having said that, these factors only mention the visible categories of my respondents, it says nothing about their compassion, empathy, and altruism towards the issues of gender equality, which all of them expressed greatly during the interviews. What the visible non-intersectional characteristics do show is that my respondents are a hegemonic group, which can give an indication to the scope of how and for whom gender equality issues in each country are structured and who they represent.

It is unfortunate that the study did not include more Dutch creators in the sample. As noted in

the *methods* section, my fieldwork in the Netherlands did not run as smoothly as in Iceland for I was rejected by Dutch creators on several occasions. Since the study was limited to only eleven Dutch creators, thereof three femocrat, two academic, and six social creators it was not possible to give a clear indication of the Dutch feminist triangle. The representation of the Dutch feminist triangle is thus not optimal for a precise comparison. Further work is needed to fully understand the implications and depth of the Dutch feminist triangle to which I suggest further research.

The research and interviews were conducted in three languages: Icelandic, Dutch and written in English. Because of the language scope, some translational issues or complications may have occurred during the language shifts. In this research certain terms have been chosen for a reason which may have simplified terms or changed their meanings. Next, interviews are brief moments where words and meanings are exchanged. During these brief moments some things uttered may not represent the respondents thoughts altogether. It is important to be aware of the art of interviewing as they are only brief interactions between individuals which may simplify the understanding of certain issues adressed.

## **Summary of chapter two**

In this chapter I introduced my methods and positioned myself as a feminist scholar and a researcher in the field. I discussed the advantages of my positionality and the possible limitations of the research. This chapter also introduced the 22 Icelandic and 11 Dutch creators of change withing the government (femocrat creators), women's movement (social creators) and academia (academic creators). As the research on gender equality policies has shown, the sustainability of these policies relies on the ones working and advising on these policies. As for Ellerby's (2017) call for more intersectional and inclusive policies, these creators may be the answer to how the shortcut to change can be avoided. It is therefore that characteristics of the creators has been discussed in detail in this section. As it is their collaborative effort and expertise that is of importance in their contribution to more sustainable and inclusive gender equality policies. In what follows, gender equality policies and legislation and the organisation thereof in Iceland and the Netherlands are discussed as well as the collaborative organisation of the feminist triangle.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Gender Equality Policies in Iceland and the Netherlands**

Policies, legislation and its organisation

In order to come closer to answer the main research question on how creators can advance the developments of gender equality policies, it is important to map which policies and legislations the creators work with and the organisation thereof. This chapter focuses on the sub question on whether there is a cooperative triangular network in Iceland and the Netherlands and how they operate. This question corresponds to the criteria of a triangular network posed by the scholarship on the sustainability of gender equality policies (Gouws 1996; Outshoorn 1997; Woodward 2003; Verloo and Lombardo 2007; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Holli 2008; Findlay 2015). With regards to the policies and legislation mapped in this chapter, I only focus on the policies and legislation that articulate the issue of gender equality directly. As becomes clear in the chapter, there is no mention of body politics and reproductive rights. The reason for this is because the issues at the time of my internship and research were directed towards the issues in the labour market and the economic scope of gender equality. I am aware of the implications this may have on the conclusions. For analytic reasons, I decided to work with the issues addressed by the creators. In what follows the gender equality legislation and policies are discussed following the involvement of the feminist triangle in the organisation thereof.

### **Gender Equality Legislation and Policies**

This section maps the current gender equality policies and legislation in Iceland and the Netherlands. I only examine each country's legislation and policies framed as pursuing gender equality. The material for this section derives from the official/legal documents and information from the interviews.

#### ***Legislation***

As mentioned above, the legislation and policies addressed here are the ones clearly addressing gender equality. In Iceland, the legislation *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* was enforced in 1976. This legislation was originally meant for encouraging equality between the sexes in the field of equal wages and equal labour opportunities. Next to that, there was an emphasis on stimulating equality in education and minimize degrading advertisements. Since then the Gender Equality Act has been revised four times, resulting in what is now known as *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008* (is. Lög um jafna stöðu og jafnan rétt kvenna og karla no. 10/2008) (Ministry of Welfare 2017).

The current legislation aims still correspond to the first Gender Equality Act, to promote gender

equality in all spheres of society, that is, to maintain equal status and opportunities for women and men (Ministry of Welfare 2017: 1). In this legislation, gender equality is at the forefront, where every individual shall have equal opportunities and benefit from their own enterprises irrespective of their gender. The means of which the Gender Equality Act is to be realized is through a systematic organization of gender equality policies. The tasks regarding gender equality vary from: the labour market to the reconciliation of work and family life, gender-based violence, education and schooling and non-discriminating stereotyping in advertisements. The most recent addition to the legislation is the section on wage discrimination. More specifically, every enterprise and institution with more than 25 employees must now, next to their gender equality action plan, acquire a certification safeguarding equal wages for women and men (Ministry of Welfare 2017: 8). Iceland has become the first country to make wage inequality illegal<sup>10</sup>.

The Dutch legislation on gender equality is scattered among several laws where the sexes are mentioned in accordance to the specific legislation. That is to say, gender equality is not only covered by one legislation, but with two: *Equal Treatment Act of Men and Women* of 1980 (nl. Wet Gelijke Behandeling van mannen en vrouwen) and *General Law on Equal Treatment* of 1994 (nl. Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling 1994) (College voor de Rechten van de Mens 2018: np). The first act emphasises the equal treatment of men and women. However, when one looks more closely into the actual legislation it mostly applies to the labour market. More specifically, it refers to working conditions, terms of employment and sexual intimidation at work (art. 1a; art. 1b; art. 1c Wet Gelijke Behandeling van mannen en vrouwen 1980). The issue of equal wages is addressed in this legislation in article 7 (art. 7 Wet Gelijke Behandeling van mannen en vrouwen 1980) but has seemingly not been effective in practice according to the Dutch femocrat creators. Furthermore, this legislation was developed in accordance with the European Union who encouraged legislation on advancing women's position in society in the early 90s (Lombardo and Meier 2007). A few years later, the *General Law on Equal Treatment* (nl. Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling 1994) was established as an extension of that pledge adding principles such as sexual orientation, sex (as in men, women, transsexuals, transvestites and intersex), civil status and pregnancy to the existing religious belief, political affiliation, race and nationality (art. 1 Algemene Wet Gelijke Behandeling 1994). The reason for the delay of the enactment was the political spectre at the time which ruled the sexual orientation principle as problematic in relation to their religious deposition (Celis, Outshoorn, Meier and Motmans 2012: 123). This law covers discrimination in the sectors of social services, the labour market, education, healthcare, and housing, to name a few. According to the creators there is more legislation that hints towards gender equality without mentioning the word or goal of gender equality as explained in the following quote:

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<sup>10</sup> Lillianne Ploumen, a member of the Dutch Parliament, was inspired by the latest addition in the Icelandic legislation and proposes to implement the same system into a Dutch setting, building on the Icelandic legislation, with the bill on Equal Wages (nl. Wet Gelijke Beloning).

“A great deal of legislation contains things [about gender equality] that influence it and is also partly meant to, even if it is not always mentioned. And mentioning it is important ... but the content is more important. If you only look at legislation that says: we are focused on gender equality, then there are only a few. But if you look at legislation that focuses on gender equality without mentioning it, whether it is partly directed towards it or that certain parts of it are aimed towards [gender equality], then naturally there are more of them. That’s true” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>11</sup> femocrat creator.

This excerpt shows that the Acts that frame gender equality as the main goal are only few legally binding documents. Gender equality policies, on the other hand, have a wider range.

### ***Policies***

The policies that are examined in this thesis are the most recent editions of the policies in each country: the Icelandic Gender Equality Action Plan for 2016-2019 (is. Framkvæmdaáætlun í jafnréttismálum fyrir árin 2016–2019) and the Dutch Nota on Emancipation for 2018-2021 (nl. Emancipatie nota 2018-2021).

The Icelandic Gender Equality Action Plan is bound to the 11<sup>th</sup> article in the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008* where the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality, is to present a motion for parliament within one year of the general election. This plan of four years must include the “projects intended to secure equal status and equal rights of women and men in Icelandic society” (Ministry of Welfare 2017: 6). The action plan has 21 concrete goals/projects with a budget and an assigned ministry of responsibility which shows that it is a broad span of goals the Icelandic government has set for itself. Having worked as an intern at the Ministry of Welfare, I can confirm that these are not merely fine written words and unrealistic goals, but that actions are undertaken.

The Dutch government does not conceptualize their gender equality policy a policy, but a nota. The reason why was unclear to me during the research. The Dutch femocrat creators confirmed that the nota was their government’s approved guide to which their gender equality intentions for the coming years were expressed (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). The latest nota presented by Minister of Education, Culture and Science, is called *Principles in practice* (nl. Principes in praktijk). The impression one gets by reading the nota is that it is a precise description of the state of affairs in gender and LGBTI issues. However, there is no action plan on how to pursue the affairs mentioned in the nota. In 2007 Outshoorn and Oldersma<sup>12</sup> described the gender equality policy at the time as a ‘shopping list’

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<sup>11</sup> Original quote: “Heel veel wetgeving bevat dingen [over gendergelijkheid] waar het invloed op heeft en ook wel gedeeltelijk ook zo bedoeld zijn, al wordt het niet altijd benoemd. En dat benoemen is belangrijk...maar de inhoud is belangrijker. Als je alleen maar gaat kijken naar wetgeving die zegt: wij zijn gericht op gendergelijkheid dan is het weinig. Maar als je kijkt naar wetgeving dat gericht is op gendergelijkheid zonder dat te benoemen, of het mede gericht is of dat er bepaalde onderdelen daarvan op [gendergelijkheid] gericht zijn dan is het veel meer natuurlijk. Dat wel”

<sup>12</sup> Outshoorn and Oldersma 2007: 191.

rather than a logical plan of action to which I agree with the current one. Content wise, there are only precise facts and hopes of getting women out in the labour market because that is the only way to become financially independent. Interestingly enough, the last point mentioned in the nota on emancipation is ‘reinforcement of legislation’. Neither the nota nor the minister has expressed any further legislation on gender equality other than “that measures will be taken into account if the 30% of women are not reached on boards by next year” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>13</sup>. This refers to the representation of women in top-functions and it seems like more of a threat than as a specific measure. A Dutch academic creator addressed threats as the way government tries to stimulate the market:

*“Threats of a quota are used and that is also a bit the way the policy is implemented. For a long time, there is a sort of discussion with the appointed party as an attempt to come to the conclusion that they implement it themselves with the legislation as a final draw. You do not start with the legislation, you start with a threat because the impact of the legislation, in the end, is not very big if you end up using the tool to seal the deal”* (resp. 08.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>14</sup> academic creator.

From the description of the academic creator, the Dutch government seems to reflect a (neo)liberal approach to their governing. Cox (2007) argues that this approach is based on competitiveness while simultaneously promoting self-interest as opposed to collective efforts. A collective effort is, however, something that needs to be in order whilst organizing gender equality policies according to Outshoorn and Kantola (2007).

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<sup>13</sup> The femocrat creator to whom I refer to here stated that the current Minister of Equality, Ingrid van Engelshoven frequently answers with this particular phrasephrase in interviews and discussions on quota.

<sup>14</sup> Original quote: “Er wordt wel gedreigd met een Quotum en dat is ook wel een beetje de manier waarop het beleid wordt uitgevoerd. Heel lang wordt het met de partij gesproken en een poging gemaakt om tot een conclusie te komen maar dat het zelf wordt ingevoerd en dan is het laatste stukje dan de wetgeving. Je begint niet met de wetgeving je begint met...een bedreiging want de impact van de wetgeving is dan op het einde niet zo heel erg groot als je op het einde een beetje dicht knoopt”

## **Organisation of the feminist triangle**

This section is devoted to the systematic organization of gender equality policies, what Outshoorn and Kantola call the ‘women’s policy agencies’ in their analysis. These agencies can take the forms of advisory units, policy monitoring units, units with implementation responsibilities and commissions with investigation powers (2007: 3). Both countries have teams of experts working within the government who both develop and implement gender equality policies and legislation. Here the organization of the policies and legislation in Iceland and the Netherlands are discussed and the involvement of the women’s movements/ organizations and the academia.

### ***The governmental agencies***

The starting point of the systematic organization of the gender equality policies can be traced to when the United Nations (UN) declared 1975 as the International Women’s Year (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel 2013). Both the Icelandic and Dutch governments had been involved in initiatives to empower the position of women in their countries for far longer, but it was not until 1976 in Iceland (Ástgeirsdóttir 2016: np) and 1977 in the Netherlands (Outshoorn 1995: 169) that policies were implemented to advance women’s status. In what follows, the current women’s policy agencies of Iceland and the Netherlands are mapped to see how gender equality policies are organized.

### **Iceland**

The current organization of gender equality policy in Iceland has been bound by law since 2000, in the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008*. The current organization of gender equality policy in Iceland can be divided into five main units: The Gender Equality unit within the Ministry of Welfare, which coordinates the Icelandic governments gender equality policies; The Centre for Gender Equality, the administration unit for gender equality work; The Gender Equality Complaints Committee, a committee which regulates legislation regarding gender equality, and the Gender Equality Council, which promotes and advises on gender equality in the working lives of people (Ministry of Welfare 2018: 26-35). A recent reinstated unit from 2009, to the organization of gender equality policy, is the Board of Ministers, whose role it is to coordinate the minister’s functions in accordance to the government’s action plan on gender equality (Ministry of Welfare 2018: 26). All these units have specific tasks but the one to which I refer to, is the only unit that can be compared to the Dutch organization: The Gender Equality Unit (is. Jafnréttisteymi).

The Ministry of Welfare in Iceland (is. Velferðarráðuneytið) has a team of six people working in the Gender Equality Unit. This unit has been active since the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2017 within the Ministry of Welfare, in the social services department. The then Minister of Social Affairs and Equality in office, appointed this team due to the expanding emphasis on improving the Equality Act and the addition of the Equal Wage certificate/standard into the legislation (resp. 11.05.2018, Iceland). The main task of the



unit is to develop and implement the gender equality policies and legislation and serve as a support to the Minister of Social Affairs and Equality in his gender equality endeavours. Additionally, every ministry in Iceland has a gender equality expert referred to as ‘equality representatives’ who are responsible for gender mainstreaming and gender equality matters within the respective policy area (Ministry of Welfare 2018: 28). In terms of the Dutch construction of the women’s policy agency, the advice is given through another channel: alliances.

## **The Netherlands**

The Netherlands have had a coordinative agency on gender equality within the ministry since 1978 (Outshoorn 1995: 168). The agency is called the Department for the Coordination of Equality Policy (nl. Directie Coördinatie Emancipatiebeleid, hereafter: DCE) and has been central to the women’s policy agency network since its foundation. Next to that, what was formerly known as the Equal Treatment Commission was incorporated into the Netherlands Institute for Human Rights in 2012 (nl. College voor de Rechten van de Mens), a tribunal for equality issues. This institute covers the implementation of several legal binding documents such as the constitution and a few legislation regarding equal treatment. These are the only agencies operating in the Dutch gender equality organization, which used to have a stronger network in the past but deteriorated with the purple coalition in 2002 (Outshoorn and Oldersma 2007: 186).

The DCE is the counterpart of the Icelandic Gender Equality Unit. The DCE owes its existence to an external commission from 1974 called the Emancipation Commission (nl. Emancipatiecommissie EK). This commission primary task was to advise the government on the content of future gender equality policies. They engineered the “blueprint for the DCE” for they called for a special women’s policy unit to set up an “intersectoral coordination”, which later evolved into the DCE (Outshoorn 1995: 170). The organization of gender equality seemed to be well established in the Netherlands in the 90’s, but a lot has changed since then. The DCE team is still active and consists of 25 civil servants who work at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (nl. Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap). They coordinate the policies in the area of gender and LGBTI. What has changed is the cooperation with the women’s movement which seems to have become fragile after 2002. The DCE now only serves as financial supporters of feminist initiatives and academic research, elaborated upon in the coming subsection.

### ***Women’s movement’s involvement in policy-making***

According to Woodward, the network between the academics, women’s movement, and the femocrats offers “speed, flexibility, the glue of social relations and institutional history, and perhaps resilience and strength by providing a biography to social transactions embodied by individual actors” (Woodward 2003: 80). The glue that she speaks of in this quote refers to the collaboration between the creators of

change and what they can offer in social transactions. The way this network or the women's policy agencies are orchestrated in the Netherlands, differs to the Icelandic one. In Iceland, the members of the women's movements still take the streets every year, organizing rallies and fight for radical changes. The Dutch movements do no longer stage public protests to the same extent they did in the past and have therefore become slightly invisible. It is not that the Dutch women's movements do not want radical change, only the collectivity is not as visible in the Netherlands as it seems to be in Iceland when it comes to lobbying through demonstrations and rallies<sup>15</sup>.

## **The Netherlands**

When the women's policy agency was at its best in the Netherlands, the relationship between the government agency (DCE) and the Dutch women's movements was argued to be one of the strengths of the Dutch organization according to Outshoorn and Oldersma (2007: 193). The Dutch women's movements have since the 1980's been institutionalized and currently get grants from the government to function (Outshoorn 1995: 181). The relationship between the women's organizations and DCE is of a financial kind, with advice from the field as reciprocal.

There has been a realization within the movements, that to stay afloat, they need to collaborate with the government. This collaboration is now formalized by the government as "strategic partnerships" (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands). This partnership is described by a femocrat creator, as an alliance between different kinds of organizations to work on a specific theme devoted to LGBTI and/or gender equality. The reason why the DCE decided to move from a subsidized model to a model through alliances was so that there would be a more dynamic collaboration between the government and the organizations. The Dutch femocrat creators felt a certain distance between the government and civil society with the subsidized model, which they are now trying to bridge. Another reason for changing the collaboration is that the DCE wants to have more control over the process and not only provide the financial resources:

*"So now we say: for the coming five years we will work together on the same goal as a ministry and civil society and concentrate on getting somewhere in these five years"* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>16</sup> femocrat creator.

By 'getting somewhere' the femocrat creator refers to a progression in the state of equality in the Netherlands, which according to the femocrat creator, needs much improvement. Ideally, this new format could contribute to the solidarity within the civil society and a decline in competitiveness

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<sup>15</sup> Some Dutch social creators feel that there has been a slight shift in these matters in the past two years such as with the success of the Women's March and the online resistance.

<sup>16</sup> Original quote: "Nu zeggen we: met elkaar voor de komende 5 jaar hebben we dezelfde doelen en gaan we ons als ministerie en als maatschappelijk middenveld gaan we ons samen inzetten om over 5 jaar verder te komen"

between the organizations for funding which threatens their continuity (Outshoorn 1995: 181). Another Dutch femocrat creator claims that there was a decline in solidarity in the movement while they all started advocating on different issues at various ministries, which led to less collaboration and decline of a common forum (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). Outshoorn (1995: 182) argues that the arena in which the feminists shared their ideas slowly dissolved in the 1980's. Although this may have been a reality in that particular time frame, today's scenery indeed shows that the fragmented collectivity in the field of Dutch women's movements led to the deconstruction of the women's policy agencies. This deconstruction may be traced to the new funding strategies and institutionalization of the movements which in turn demised the legitimacy of the DCE. The creators also spoke of the perks of the funding and the institutionalisation. For example, the CEDAW shadow reports are the fruits of this funding, currently in the hands of a Dutch women's organization called WO=MEN. In Iceland, the same shadow report is in similar hands, but without extensive funding from the government.

## **Iceland**

The CEDAW shadow report is written by the Icelandic Women's Rights Association (is. Kvenréttindafélag Íslands) and the Icelandic Human Rights Centre (Mannréttindafélag Íslands). Apart from these two organizations, other entities contribute to the report such as W.O.M.E.N - Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network in Iceland (Samtök kvenna af erlendum uppruna), The Federation of Women's Societies in Reykjavík (is. Bandalag kvenna í Iceland), the Icelandic Women's Association (Kvenfélagasamband Íslands) and the Women's Counselling (is. Kvennaráðgjöfin) who all share offices in the same building, called Hallveigarstaðir, after the first Icelandic female settler (Hallveigarstaðir 2017: np). These movements create a community of women's/social organizations. The Centre for Gender Equality Reykjavík office was for this reason also placed under the same roof (reps. 12.12.2017, Iceland). This created, as mentioned earlier, a community that seeks each other's advice and expertise. Because the Centre for Gender Equality Reykjavík office is situated in this community, the line between the women's movement and the government is short.

Even though these Icelandic women's movements do not have a financial backbone as to the extents in the Netherlands (which is, however, declining in certain measures), the connection with the governmental institutions are not bound to the ideas or projects led by the government. Next to that, the movements are visible and active in recruiting new members. Rallies are still organized on an annual basis along with conferences, lectures and workshops, which make the voices of the movements heard by both the public and the government. The movements have not become institutionalized, they still stand out and voice their concerns, which has become a bit of a struggle in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the action has shifted toward online communities, into the online mobilization of feminist issues (resp. 15.03.2018, The Netherlands).

### ***Academic involvement with policy-making***

The academic involvement in policy-making was argued by Halsaa (1991) as an important addition to the strategic partnerships for their expertise on the fields of gender equality. In Iceland and the Netherlands, collaboration with academia differs to some extent as will become clear in the fourth chapter. For now, the academic involvement in policy-making is reflected upon from the experiences and insights obtained from the interviews and official reports.

### **Iceland**

In both countries, the Gender Studies discipline is a part of higher education. Icelandic gender scholars conduct research which is integrated into official reports such as the report on the status of women and men in the labour market, and the educational system (Ólafsdóttir and Rögnvaldsdóttir 2015). Next to that, the distribution of the gendered knowledge is a part of the legislative frame. As stated in the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Right of Women and Men no 10/2008* on education and schooling: “Studies of the status of the genders in Icelandic society shall be enhanced, this applying equally to primary academic research and to applied studies, and their findings shall be disseminated systematically within the educational system and to the media” (art. 23 Act on Equal Status and Equal Right of Women and Men no 10/2008). This shows that gender-based knowledge is implemented into all levels of education and media in Iceland and taken into consideration while forming or re-forming policies and legislation. As for the creators themselves, they also attend courses and workshops which are based on the findings of feminist scholarly work, keeping them updated on the most recent findings and developments.

### **The Netherlands**

In the Netherlands the academic involvement with the government was described by the creators based on financial distribution (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands). The government finances certain projects that examine the status of men and women such as the ‘Emancipation monitor’ (nl. Emancipatiemonitor) run by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research, a government institution. Additionally, they fund the Institute on Gender Equality (nl. Atria kennisinstituut voor emancipatie en vrouwengeschiedenis). According to a Dutch academic creator the financial stream towards Women’s/Gender Studies has declined to some extent in the past years for independent research (resp. 15.03.2018, The Netherlands). From the basis of the information obtained from the creators and legal documents, the focus on gendered knowledge distribution is not one of the primary focus of the political environment. This may explain why the academic involvement in policy-making differs. It is on the one hand done as an assignment of the government in an institutional setting and the other more from the urgency of academic based knowledge production.

### Summary of chapter three

This chapter introduced the policies and legislation the creators work with and the organisation thereof. In spite of the dissimilarities in political involvement and economic participation, both countries have legislation and policies to advance the position of women and men in society. However, there are some differences in the organization of the Icelandic and Dutch policies and legislation. The current legislation regarding gender equality are: the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* (Iceland 1976) and the *General Act on Equal Treatment* (Netherlands 1994). As for the policies, the Icelandic Gender Equality Action Plan for 2016-2019 has a broad scope. These plans derive from the issues in the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men* and correspond to the issues on the family/work dynamics and the representation of women in top-function, the labour market and political functions. The Dutch Nota on Emancipation for 2018-2021 however is more focused on the issues of women's participation in the labour market, women's financial independence and the safety of the LGBTI community. The current legislation and policies in the Netherlands and Iceland do not apply intersectional perspectives. In practice the policies do not live up to their words on paper which needs some improvement in both cases according to the creators, if they are to follow Ellerby's (2017) advice on preventing the before mentioned 'shortcut'.

From the information attained from the creators, the foundation on which the policies are built on differ as well. The Dutch seem to favor a 'bottom-up' approach where the field needs to sort out their own balances without special measures. In Iceland, there is an understanding that special measures are needed to realize the equal status of women and men in Iceland. In the case of Iceland, a 'top-down' framework is applied, where strict policies and special measures such as gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and quotas need to be applied to achieve gender equality. Iceland in this regard has more concrete measures to realize these policies through action plans than the Netherlands. This is because the Dutch militate on the long tradition of creating consensus instead of concrete action plans. As the chapter shows, the legislation has different kinds of power in terms of implementation, which is similar to the ways in which the policies are applied to practical inquiries.

In terms of the organisation of the policies and legislation, the feminist triangle in both countries operate differently. In Iceland, the development of the women's policy agency is framed through legal documentation and has been growing into what it is today, an organism with different kinds of creators involved in the process of creating gender equality policies. In the Netherlands, the organization of gender equality agencies started strong and then declined slowly into what is now only known to be in the hands of the DCE and the professionalized organizations in the alliances. Due to the reorganization of funding strategies and lack of political interest in the gender equality concerns, the network of women's movements and the government institutions has dismantled in the Netherlands. In Iceland the involvement of the women's movement does not seem to be as institutionalised as in the Netherlands. The same goes for the involvement of the academia and gendered knowledge. In the Icelandic educational system, media and governmental reports are supplied with the knowledge produced by

gender scholars. In contrast, the Dutch gendered knowledge is often produced by governmental institutions as governmental assignments. The gendered knowledge is thus not distributed to the educational system but rather used to monitor the state of affairs.

I have addressed the cooperative network of the feminist triangle in both countries by mapping gender equality policies and legislation and the organisation of the feminist triangle. I now turn to how the creators describe and conceptualise the strengths and shortcomings of their society, policies and legislation when it comes to gender equality. The upcoming chapter brings us closer to answering the research question '*How do the creators of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands contribute to the sustainability and intersectionality of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*' through the descriptions of the creators' own expertise and experiences of the cooperation of the feminist triangle. These insights show how the feminist triangles operate and whether the creators advance gender equality policies to be more inclusive from the perception of the creators of change.

## Chapter 4

### The Creators of Change

This chapter is devoted to ‘the creators of change’. As argued by the scholarship on gender equality policies, the creators hold the key to maintaining gender equality policies through working collaboratively together with a gendered awareness. This chapter looks into their expertise, experiences and contributions to changing and maintaining the gender equality policies, as stressed in the main research question. A set of sub-questions are taken into consideration as well: ‘*How do the creators frame gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*’ and ‘*To what extent do the creators advance intersectional approaches in the gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*’

The first subsection is devoted to the difference in conceptualization mentioned in the interviews such as gender equality/emancipation, quota, and feminism. That is then followed by the cultural/political/historical/religious influential forces that the creators believe shaped their gender equality policies. Following the discussion, the roles of the feminist triangle are discussed from the creator’s perspectives. The themes examined relate to the role of the government, the women’s movement and the entanglement of academia in the pursuit of gender equality. More specifically, the importance of the cooperation between the triangle members is reflected upon by the creators. The chapter ends with a comparison of the creators’ visions of improvement for gender equality in both countries.

## Creators' conceptualizations of gender equality

*Gender equality, emancipation, quota and feminism*

As argued by Verloo and Lombardo (2007), gender equality can be conceptualized through the visions of *sameness*, *difference* and *transformation*, which shows that it is important to realize the ways in which language is used and which meaning words can have when examining policies and implementations. During my fieldwork, there were some concepts that sparked controversy among the creators. These concepts were: *gender equality*, *emancipation*, *quota* and *feminism*.

### ***Gender Equality – Kynjajafnrétti***

In Iceland, the majority of the creators referred to 'jafnrétti', meaning equality, when they spoke of gender equality. The term 'jafnrétti' was defined by the creators as equal rights, opportunities, and outcomes for everyone, whilst they often followed up by only giving examples relating to men and women. The creators usually did not refer to the term gender when they spoke of equality of the sexes while their intention was to speak of gender equality, which in Icelandic is 'kynjajafnrétti'. Some creators did communicate a clear distinction between equality as human rights, and gender equality as being a part of those rights with a clear focus on men and women. Other creators hinted towards a more intersectional approach. Usually, these individuals had some sort of background in Gender Studies such as the following femocrat creator states the importance of looking beyond the categorization of gender:

*“As a feminist, I know that it is a large variable, but it has those effects that it spreads across other fields. That is the way it is, what can I say? You have to eat the elephant in a few separate bites. You know? You just assume that the rest will get integrated at some point. It is all part of it. That is where I am at with this [intersectionality]”* (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>17</sup> femocrat creator.

Another femocrat creator described in a less metaphoric way, but with a tone of reflection towards the category of gender in itself:

*“When I look at equality, I look towards equality for all. Then we are not only looking at gender because we all know that people can identify oneself outside of those specters. It is important to be aware of when you are working with issues regarding equality. Because, if*

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<sup>17</sup> Original quote: “En auðvitað sem feministi veit ég að þetta er náttúrulega stór breyta sem að hefur í rauninni, að það hefur slík áhrif að það smitar líka út frá sér sko. Þannig að það er bara, hvað á ég að segja? Maður borðar fílinn bara í nokkrum bitum. Þú veist, maður gerir ráð fyrir því að hitt komi og blandist inn í þetta seinna meir. Ég er svolítið þar með þetta”



*we only address gender as a category, then we may get stuck in highlighting the privileged groups of men and women”* (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>18</sup> femocrat creator.

As the creator above showed, it is important to look beyond men and women to avoid, what Ellerby (2017) notes as the ‘privileged group of elite white women’. The reason this aspect came up is that in general ‘jafnrétti’ was often referred to be equality between the sexes. When confronted with this fact, the creators often said they were fully aware of their use of the term as gender equality. They responded with that they did not mean to only address men and women, but that this is the way the word has developed in the Icelandic language. One of the creators hinted toward a possible explanation why ‘jafnrétti’ has come to mean something broader than ‘kynjajafnrétti’:

*“This [usage of the word] has been a language convention for a long time now. After intersectionality became more vivid during discussions, it may somehow have changed equality to align with the broader scope of subordinated groups while then linking the term gender equality to men and women”* (resp. 20.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>19</sup> academic creator.

This academic creator argues that the term ‘jafnrétti’ frequently used in Iceland has somehow transformed to mean intersectionality. That may be the case for the ones with an academic background. However, most of the Icelandic creators in the field of government and civil society used ‘jafnrétti’ to refer to the sexes. All creators stress the importance of broadening the term equality, to be more intersectional. In retrospect, if one looks at the governmental action plans and policies of the Icelandic government, gender equality is ‘bent’ to mean equality between men and women, which may indicate why the creators adjust that to their own use. Gender equality was seen as a problem for both men and women as this femocrat creator demonstrates:

*“Equality is an issue that touches all of us. Even though I often speak of women’s issues, I only highlight women because some issues primarily affect them. In other instances, we can see through numbers that it also leans on men and boys. And women have taken up their issues as well, just to highlight that. And men have also taken up women’s rights causes. People talk about special women’s rights, but this is a cause that affects us all, especially because we are such a broad range, like a rainbow! You cannot say that women are at one end and men on the other. We are just somewhere in that rainbow”* (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>20</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>18</sup> Original quote: “Sko ég lít á jafnrétti sem þá erum við að horfa á jafnrétti allra. Þá erum við ekki bara að horfa á kyn af því að við vitum það vel að sumir skilgreina sig fyrir utan kyn. Það er nauðsynlegt að þegar að við erum að vinna að jafnréttismálum að við horfum á það. Vegna þess að annars, ef við erum bara að horfa á kyn að þá getum við festst í því að horfa bara á forrétindahópa karla og kvenna”

<sup>19</sup> Original quote: “Já það hefur verið sko málhefð fyrir því lengi sko en svo eftir ja eftir að meira var farið að taka mið af samvinnun að þá hefur umræðan einmitt kannski aðeins breyst í það þá að tala um jafnrétti og það nái þá yfir sko aðra undirskipaða hópa og kynjajafnrétti eigi meira við um karla og konur”

<sup>20</sup> Original quote: “Jafnréttismál eru mál okkar allra og þó að ég segi oft sko málefni kvenna að þá er það bara á svo mörgu stöðum hefur hallað á konur. En svo á öðrum stöðum þá vitum við og sjáum í tölum að það hallar á karla, og drengi. Og það hafa ekki síður konur barist fyrir því, bara svo að það sé tekið fram. Og karlar hafa líka barist fyrir réttindum kvenna. Það eru tekin svona sérstök kvennréttindi en þetta er málefni okkar allra og það er

As the examples show, the Icelandic creators either used ‘jafnrétti’ or ‘kynjajafnrétti’ to articulate equality between the sexes. As Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo (2009) would describe it, it seems like the Icelandic creators ‘bend’ or ‘stretch’ the term ‘jafnrétti’ (e. equality) to fit their analysis. In the Netherlands, the Dutch creators also followed the trend of ‘bending’ and ‘stretching’ their term for gender equality: ‘emancipatie’.

### ***Vrouwenemancipatie – Emancipation***

In the Netherlands, gender equality was often referred to as ‘emancipatie’ by the creators. Usually, the conversation drifted towards the emancipation of women which some of them admitted was an old-fashioned term for gender equality. When the creators were asked where and when the term emancipation was used for women’s suffrage, a femocrat creator replied that it transferred from the US civil movement (resp. 05.04.2018, The Netherlands). The term ‘vrouwenemancipatie’ meaning women’s emancipation has been changing into symbolizing economic prospects. The word emancipation, meaning realization and mobilization from certain social, legal or political restraints has been changing into symbolizing economic prospects. Nowadays this economic mobilization is realized by encouraging women to increase their working hours:

*“Part of the government’s policy says: the labour participation must simply be as high as possible, so the best thing would be that everyone would just start working full-time. That is part of the government policy. But that is of course not the emancipation aspect of it. Economically, there are all kinds of arguments for this. But from [the perspective] of emancipation there is immense inequality between men and women”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>21</sup> femocrat creator.

Furthermore, this femocrat creator explains that it is part of the mobilization discourse that focuses on women because men usually already work full-time, whereas women do not. As the mobilization is directed towards women, the problem of emancipation is often framed towards women’s issues, as argued here:

*“I mean gender equality is about men and women. It is more of an issue for women because we are more affected by gender equality than men. That is not symmetrical or something. Men also suffer from it, but it is not symmetrical. It is not that they suffer from it in equal*

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líka sérstaklega þegar að við sjáum að það er bara fólk er bara einhver regnbogi og það er ekki hægt að segja bara að konur séu hérna megin og karlar hérna megin. Við erum bara hérna einhverstaðar (í öllum regnboganum)”

<sup>21</sup> Original quote: “Een deel van het kabinetsbeleid zegt wel: de arbeidsparticipatie moet gewoon sowieso zo hoog mogelijk zijn, dus het mooiste zou zijn dat iedereen gewoon fulltime zou gaan werken. Dat vindt een deel van het kabinetsbeleid. Maar dat is natuurlijk niet het emancipatie aspect daarvan. Economisch zijn daar misschien allerlei argumenten voor. Maar vanuit [het] emancipatie [perspectief] is er enorme ongelijkheid tussen man en vrouwen”

*measures. The ones who are more bothered by it, are they more aware of it” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>22</sup> femocrat creator.*

What the creator argues is that it is an issue for both men and women, but there are often more women engaged with the subject as it required to be catered to the ones that needed it the most, often women. However, all the Dutch creators agree that men should become more involved in the issues of gender equality as “agents and beneficiaries of change” (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands). One social creator argued that the issue should be juxtaposed and framed to be a man’s issue if there is to be any change:

*“Well, in fact, it’s actually a men’s issue. Because at this moment all policymakers and everyone who is in charge at a higher level, are maybe 80 to 90% mostly men. So, if we do not make it a men’s issue then it will not be solved on a short-term basis” (resp. 01.03.2018c, The Netherlands)<sup>23</sup> social creator.*

According to these excerpts, there is some debate on whether it is a women’s or men’s issue. The Dutch creators stretch the term ‘emancipatie’ to mean ‘vrouwenemancipatie’. ‘Vrouwenemancipatie’ (women’s emancipation) was rarely ever used by the creators. With ‘emancipatie’ they seemed to focus on the emancipation of the LGBTI community as well as women. The intersectional aspect of this focus was also mentioned to be central to the work of a social creator:

*“Either way, we need to emphasise the importance of using a gendered lens. And that it is good to look beyond the position of men but also to look at women’s positions and how they relate to intersectionality. And that is just what we do continuously, yes that is actually our job” (resp. 28.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>24</sup> social creator.*

Here the need for intersectionality is stressed by one of the social creators as being part of their job. This shows that both the Icelandic and Dutch creators are concerned with the importance of intersectionality. What is similar in the creators’ framings of ‘jafnrétti’ and ‘emancipatie’, is that they are clearly articulated towards mobilization. In both Iceland and the Netherlands, everyone should participate in

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<sup>22</sup> Original quote: “Ik bedoel het gaat wel over mannen en vrouwen, gender gelijkheid. Het is voor vrouwen meer een issue want wij hebben er meer last van de gendergelijkheid dan de mannen. Dat is niet symmetrisch ofzo. Mannen hebben er ook last van, maar het is niet symmetrisch. Het is niet dat ze er in gelijke mate last van hebben. Degene die er meer last van hebben die zijn er toch meer van bewust”

<sup>23</sup> Original quote: “Nou sterker nog, eigenlijk is het een mannen issue. Want op dit moment zijn alle beleidsmakers en iedereen die op hoog niveau de touwtjes in de handen hebben, misschien wel 80 tot 90% mannen. Dus als we het geen mannenprobleem maken dan wordt het niet opgelost op korte termijn”

<sup>24</sup> Original quote: “Either way, in ieder geval zorgen van de belangrijkheid van het kijken met een gender lens benadrukken. En dat het goed is om niet alleen te kijken naar de positie van de man maar ook de positie van de vrouw en het samenspel en inderdaad intersectioneel kijken. En dat is gewoon wat wij continu doen, ja dat is dus eigenlijk ons werk”

this mobilization for it affects both sexes according to the creators. Next to emancipation and equality, the word ‘quota’ also has a different association in Iceland and the Netherlands.

### **Quota**

In terms of the implementation of the feminist tool, Iceland has implemented quotas in their policies and the Netherlands have not which may affect the way the creators conceptualize the tool. In Iceland, people were already used to a quota system. Quotas were originally used for the fishery (Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í Íslenskum fræðum 2018: np). It has now been translated to the tool which balances the sexes in boards and committees for example. The Icelandic creators described that implementing quotas was not a preferred step among the people working in both public and private sector when it was presented in 2008. They also described that people eventually realized that these measures were needed to improve the position of women on boards and committees:

*“The gender quota was extremely criticised at the time, but I think that people have gotten used to this or at least of the thought of you know: yes, of course, we need both sexes on the boards and committees ... this stimulates the transformation of the norms”* (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>25</sup> femocrat creator.

*“Gender quota is important for people to be included into a certain position, people that would otherwise have to prove themselves to be more qualified than others for the same position. Over time the quota leads to changes in attitudes. It is however not the best solution, the best solution would be the opposite, that a change in attitude would have secured the position rather than the quota, so that the quota would not be needed”* (resp. 12.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>26</sup> femocrat creator.

These examples show the ways in which the Icelandic creators see the developments of quotas enhanced in their society. According to recent measures, the male/female balance on committees and boards has never been as even as it is today (Velferðarráðuneytið 2017: np). In the Netherlands, the public as well as political figures seem to be allergic to the term quota and refrain from using it as a tool. A femocrat creator explains what this means in Dutch society:

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<sup>25</sup> Original quote: “Kynjakvótinn var ofboðslega gagnrýnd á sínum tíma en ég held að fólk sé farið að venjast þessu eða þessari tilhugsun þú veist: já auðvitað þurfum við bæði kyn í nefndum og stjórnnum og ... þetta ýtir undir breytingar á normum“

<sup>26</sup> Original quote: “Kynjakvóti er mikilvægur og skiptir máli til að fólk komist að, fólk sem annars þyrfti að sanna sig mun betur en aðrir sem eru að keppa um sömu stöðu. Hann kemur til með að leiða af sér breytt viðhorf með tímanum. Hann er samt ekki besta lausnin, besta lausnin væri öfug, að breytt viðhorf hefði orðið til þess að við þurfum ekki kynjakvóta”

*“Yes, well we are an over-regulated country you know. So, when you hear people say: ‘I am allergic to it’ that means that there are too many regulations”* (resp. 05.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>27</sup> femocrat creator.

A Dutch femocrat creator shows how this ‘allergic’ perception above is translated in the bureaucratic setting. As soon as they put the word *quota* in their official papers, plans or nota’s some ministers and cabinet members refuse to read the whole document, only because of the bad association of the word *quota*:

*“No, I do not think it’s a good word because it’s so politicized. So, when a lot of people and also politicians, and also ministers within this cabinet...the moment they see the word quota they are against it because there are so many connotations and ideas around it. While you could already say, now men are pulled on because there are more men and it is not that men are more talented. Yes, it would be nice if we could find another term for it”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>28</sup> femocrat creator.

Another femocrat creator claimed that people get nervous while using certain words such as *quota* to the position of men and women in society:

*“But it is indeed difficult in the Netherlands to mention that it is for women because then people will say: yes, and what about the men? You have to look at the gender-related aspects of violence, for example, and not because it is not bad that a man is beaten by a woman, that is just as bad. But it happens much less frequently so if you want to do some sort of prevention then you have to look for the causes. What gender norms are behind it? Why do men think they can do that? Why do women sometimes accept it? Look at the gendered issues! But people get easily nervous when it is mentioned”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>29</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>27</sup> Original quote: “Ja... Nou weet je wij zijn een over gereguleerd land. Dus wat je hoort als mensen zeggen: ik ben allergisch voor. Dan is dat omdat er heel veel regels zijn”

<sup>28</sup> Original quote: “Nee, ik denk niet dat het een goed woord is omdat het zo gepolitiseerd is het woord. Dus dat heel veel mensen en ook politici, en ook ministers binnen dit kabinet...op het moment dat ze het woord *quotum* zien zijn ze er tegen omdat er zo veel connotaties zijn en ideeën omheen hangen. Terwijl je nu al zou kunnen zeggen, nu worden mannen zelf voort getrokken want er zijn veel meer mannen en het is niet zo dat mannen veel talentvolle zijn. Ja, het zou mooi zijn als we een andere term er voor zouden kunnen vinden”

<sup>29</sup> Original quote: “Maar het is wel inderdaad moeilijk in Nederland om te benoemen dat het voor vrouwen is, want dan gaan mensen zeggen: ja en de mannen dan? Je moet naar de gender gerelateerde aspecten kijken van geweld bijvoorbeeld en niet omdat het niet erg is dat een man door een vrouw geslagen wordt, dat is even erg. Maar het gebeurt veel minder dus als je preventie wil doen dan moet je naar de oorzaken zoeken. Wat voor gender normen zitten er achter? Waarom denken mannen dat ze dat kunnen doen? Waarom accepteren vrouwen het soms? Kijk naar de gender dingen! Maar het benoemen, daar wordt men gauw zenuwachtig van”

The Dutch creators who were positive of the procedure of quotas claimed that another word is needed because of this nervousness or negativity around the word/tool. Another creator, working in the private sector agrees but has a different association with the wording. The social creator points out that in the dictionary, quota means a limited amount of something. In the Netherlands the legislative quota is called: ‘women’s quota’ (nl. Vrouwenquota) which the social creator finds problematic:

*“In the Netherlands, we speak of a women’s quota. There must be a minimum number of women in a company. And with that, the problem is also shifted, at least psychologically communicated towards women. And in the Dutch language, and how we know it from history, a quota is a maximum of something. So, actually, something is not right”* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>30</sup> social creator.

The word quota is according to the social creator contradictive to its meaning. The social creator believes that in Dutch a quota is meant as the maximum of something. So, the term is inaccurate for the actual use. It now articulates a maximum of women, while that is not the point. The point is the opposite:

*“So actually, a quota should be a maximum ... and then it should just be called a men’s quota if you want to extend that kind of lines in your policy. And then it is no longer a women’s problem, but it has become a men’s problem. Look, these are interesting things and in those small things are often solutions. And then you do not think like: ‘oh we have to find four women’ no think of: ‘hey we have six men already, that is enough for now’ you know? That gives a different approach. And I think that can also contribute to solutions”* (resp. 01.03.2018c, The Netherlands)<sup>31</sup> social creator.

According to this social creator, the term quota should become ‘mannen quota’ or male quota in English. Here the creator switches the emphasis towards men so that it becomes their problem, which interestingly is something that has not been mentioned in the literature. What is found in the literature by McRobbie (2009) and Van der Tuin (2015) and has similar connotations to the term quota in the Netherlands, is the word feminism.

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<sup>30</sup> Original quote: “In Nederland wordt er over vrouwenquotum gesproken. Er moet een minimum aantal aan vrouwen in een bedrijf zitten. En daarmee wordt het probleem ook weer verlegd in ieder geval psychologisch gezien communicatief gezien richting vrouwen. En in Nederlands taalgebruik, en hoe we het vanuit historie kennen is een quotum een maximum van iets. Dus eigenlijk klopt het ook al niet hé”

<sup>31</sup> Original quote: “Dus eigenlijk hoort een quotum een maximum te zijn...en dan hoort het dus gewoon een mannenquotum te heten als je dat soort lijnen wil doortrekken in je beleid. En dan is het ook niet meer een vrouwenprobleem maar is het een mannenprobleem geworden. Kijk dat zijn interessante dingen om even ook in die kleine dingen zitten vaak oplossingen. En dan ga je niet meer denken over we moeten 4 vrouwen zoeken, nee denk van: ‘hey we hebben nu 6 mannen, daar is het nu even klaar mee’ weet je wel? Dat geeft een andere benadering. En ik denk dat dat ook tot oplossingen kan bijdragen”

## *Feminism*

McRobbie (2009) and Van der Tuin (2015) discuss how feminism is passed down to the younger generation which frames the generation's visions and conceptualization of the ideology of feminism. In Iceland and the Netherlands, these visions seem to have been passed down differently to the next generations. The way feminism is integrated into Icelandic society is often through academic feminist knowledge which can be found in primary, secondary and higher education and the media (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland) but only through higher education in the Netherlands (resp. 15.03.2018, The Netherlands). The Icelandic creators all addressed themselves as feminists while not all the creators wanted to be associated with the term in the Netherlands, although they did all perceive the feminist ideology of gender equality something to strive for. Feminism differs slightly from emancipation according to one of the Dutch femocrat creators:

*“Feminism is that society has to change, and emancipation is that men and women within society, whatever that is, get the same position”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>32</sup> femocrat creator.

In this sense, feminism takes on the system, whereas emancipation is framed towards the position of men and women within that system, confirming the association of the term emancipation to the difference between the sexes. Some of the Dutch creators hesitated when asked the question whether they were a feminist. It seemed like they did not want to be associated with feminism due to its negative connotations:

*“Pff... well, I think it has a bit more negative association here. That is maybe the way I see it like ‘oh, those women want something too’. It is always like that.... but I have to say, I have not really gone into it really, to be honest. So, with these feminist things, I always think: ‘Must it always be so exaggerated?’ instead of ‘doing it together with’ to ‘but we!!!’ in an extreme variant and then I find it less sympathetic so to say. Yes, personally I think it can be a bit more positive. For me, feminism is indeed a bit that negative movement that I do not feel any need to associate myself with”* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>33</sup> social creator.

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<sup>32</sup> Original quote: “Feminisme is dat de maatschappij ook moet veranderen en emancipatie is dat mannen en vrouwen binnen de maatschappij, welke die dan ook is, dezelfde positie krijgen”

<sup>33</sup> Original quote: “Pff... nou ik vind het hier nogal wel iets negatieve associatie. Dat komt misschien ook wel bij mij een beetje over van: 'oh die vrouwen wil ook wat' zeg maar. Het is altijd zo....maar ik heb me er niet echt super in verdiept moet ik wel zeggen. Dus qua feministische dingen denk ik altijd vaak van: 'joh het moet altijd zo overdreven worden?' ipv 'het samen met' naar 'maar wij!!!' in een extreme variant en dan vind ik het wat minder sympathiek worden zeg maar. Ja voor mij persoonlijk mag het wat positiever. Voor mij is feminisme echt inderdaad een beetje dat negatieve beweging waar ik zelf totaal geen behoefte aan heb om in die hoek iets te gaan doen zeg maar”

In this excerpt, the social creator brushed the answer and the exaggeration of feminism off with humor when asked about it. An academic creator, on the other hand, seemed a bit put off when asked the same question:

*“I: Are you a feminist?”*

*C: Are you asking that now at ehh ...? Well, I would associate myself with it during a debate, yes. Maybe I'd rather say that I'm ehm ehm ehm ... I think women have more to offer than how the situation is right now. Yes”* (resp. 08.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>34</sup> academic creator.

This creator shows hesitation when asked about being a feminist. The tension after I asked seemed to build up as the creator took the time to answer. This temporal moment gives insight into how much one word can change the setting. In Iceland, the creators did not shy away from associating themselves with the feminist ideology and some even perceive the word as positive and beautiful as illustrated here by a femocrat creator:

*“I think feminism is just a very beautiful word. I am of course working with it in-depth. I just find it ridiculous...or I mean, I do not think any differently of ‘retarded’, I do not think that is a bad word. I even do not perceive an ‘idiot’ to be all that bad of a word either. There are so many words that are suddenly taken out of the vocabulary because they get a bad connotation. Eh, feminism is a good international word. As for myself? I am a feminist and I work as such”* (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>35</sup> femocrat creator.

If one compares these experts from the interviews with one another there is a clear mark on how feminism is perceived differently. Coming back to the social creator that did not wish to associate with the word, while reflecting on a trip to Iceland earlier this year, the creator found the word feminism more agreeable and easier to identify with if it meant equality for everyone as it did in Iceland:

*“Yes, like you say it now, that of equality for everyone, then I can find myself more in it, so ehm. Yes, I think that on several fronts the approach in Iceland is more positive and broader. And here it is even more in boxes. Which makes me think: ‘Do your thing, but I*

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<sup>34</sup> Original quote: “I: Bent u feminist?”

C: Vraag je dat nu op ehh...? Nou ik zou tijdens een debat zou ik me daar wel aan toe bekennen ja. Misschien zou ik toch wel eerder zeggen dat ik ehm ik ehm ehm... Ik denk dat vrouwen meer in hun mars hebben dan op dit moment uitkomt. Ja.”

<sup>35</sup> Original quote: “Mér finnst bara feminismi vera bara mjög fallett orð. En ég er náttúrulega alveg á kafi í því. Mér finnst bara fíranlegt...mér finnst líka sko alveg á sama hátt og að vera þroskaheftur finnst mér ekki vera ljótt orð. Og mér finnst meirisegja fáviti ekkert ljótt orð. Það eru svo mörg orð sem að allt í einu er hætt að nota vegna þess að þau fá á sig vonda merkingu. Eh, feminismi finnst mér... það er alþjóðlegt og gott orð. Hvað varðar mig? Já ég er feminísti og ég vinn sem slíkur”



*have no association with it' and I'm not going to do anything about it either"* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>36</sup> social creator.

Another social creator suggested that the word needs modification because of these negative connotations:

*"Earlier, you also talked about the word feminism and it is exactly that ... you have to get rid of that word because that has historically seen a very specific load. So, when you talk about diversity that is more interesting. And also, because diversity is much more about equality in all shapes and sizes and sexes, but also family formations and colors and cultures and beliefs and that makes it interesting"* (resp. 01.03.2018c, The Netherlands)<sup>37</sup> social creator.

Here the social creator highlights the importance of language and how it affects its use and association with the cause. The way language is used to frame certain issues, is important to realize whilst researching conceptualizations and people's perceptions. In this case, feminism has a negative connotation, similar to the ways in which McRobbie (2009) articulates the disarticulation from feminism itself. In the quote above feminism is historicized and generationalized, something McRobbie (2009) argues to be central to the disarticulation of feminism. Feminism is placed as something of the past, that is to say: it is rendered to be out of date to which the current generation of women does not seem to identify with. It can be speculated whether a shift towards a new word can change the ways in which the difference between individuals, or if that makes the approach more intersectional. The specific historical load of feminism that the creator speaks of is not something to run away from. In fact, Iris van der Tuin argues on the contrary. Van der Tuin's (2015) take on generational feminism shows that feminism is not fixed within periods but generates through time which means that feminism is something that can never be undone. There is thus no sense of leaving feminism in the past or declaring it as something of the past, for the past of feminism is very much in the present according to Van der Tuin (2015).

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<sup>36</sup> Original quote: "Ja zoals je het nu zegt, van gelijkheid voor iedereen dan kan ik me er ook wel meer in vinden, dus ehm. Ja ik denk dat het op meerdere fronten de benadering in IS wat positiever is en wat breder is. En hier is het nog meer in hokjes. Waardoor ik denk van: 'doe lekker je ding, maar ik heb er niks mee en ik ga er niks mee doen"

<sup>37</sup> Original quote: "Je had het ook even over het woord feminisme en precies dat.... je moet van dat woord af want dat heeft een hele specifieke lading historisch gezien. Dus als je het over diversiteit hebt is dat veel interessanter. En ook omdat diversiteit veel meer gaat over gelijkheid in alle vormen en maten en seksen, maar ook gezindten en kleuren en culturen en geloven en dat maakt het interessant"

## *Summary*

In both Iceland and the Netherlands, gender equality/emancipation is often framed as a women's issue according to the creators. Some creators did reflect on the issue regarding intersectionality, the approach introduced by Crenshaw (1989) and later used by scholars such as Ellerby (2017). As the chapter shows, gender equality is 'bent' to fit the women's issue frame and fabricated towards improving the status of women (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). The Dutch conceptualization of gender equality resembles the liberal tradition of *sameness*, as argued by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) where women are illustrated to be excluded from social, economic and political settings. *Sameness* suggests a solution to which women are added to the set structure without questioning the underlying social norms. According to the Dutch creators' conceptualization of emancipation show the focus on mobilizing women into existing structures. Icelandic creators, on the other hand, use the frame of *difference*, and to some extent *transformation* as described by Verloo and Lombardo (2007). These conceptualizations question the male norms and accept the realization of taking special measures to rethink the position of women in society, with gender mainstreaming and quotas for example.

For now, it is crucial to articulate the situatedness of language and how it can affect decision making, but also how they are received and communicated in society. The discussion above on quota and feminism prove that the terms have different connotations in Dutch and Icelandic society. The Dutch linger in the negativity that often has been associated with the post-feminist era as described by McRobbie (2009), whereas in Iceland it is portrayed as positive by both Icelandic and Dutch creators. These aspects are addressed to more extent in the next subsection, along with other cultural differences that shaped the gender equality policies.

## The creator's visions of the influential factors of gender equality policies

*Cultural, historical, political and religious influences*

As argued by Verloo and Lombardo: “different national political contexts may, in fact, affect the framing of gender in/equality due to the influence of specific cultural and political histories and ideologies” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 30). In this subchapter, the political, cultural, historical and religious influences are addressed in order to make sense of the different ways in which gender equality is framed. The environment in which the creators live and work influences their contribution to changing the gender equality policies, which is why they are addressed in this chapter. This section is devoted to how the creators give meaning to these aspects in relation to the success of gender equality policies.

### Iceland

Iceland is described to have an island mentality on two different scopes with the catchphrases: ‘þetta reddast’ which is loosely translated into ‘it will all work out’ (Pétursdóttir 2009: 1) and the ‘allt eða ekkert’ referring to the ‘all or nothing’ mentality. What this means for the creators is that the Icelandic people are willing to take chances without looking back hoping for it to somehow work out in the end. One of the creators calls this “a cultural mania” explained in the following excerpt:

*“I have lived abroad for five years and then I experienced Iceland from a distance. In this distance, one can see the manic culture of Icelandic society in another light. It is kind of a manic society, because when some idea pops up then everybody is like ‘Yes let’s do that!’ Like when some people stood in the rain all night long to get the first crispy cream donuts, just to be the first ones to have one. Everyone goes to Costco, I mean, it is just a **mania**. So, when there is an idea comes that somehow sticks, like equality then everyone is like ‘Yes let’s do equality!’” (resp. 18.12.2017a, Iceland)<sup>38</sup> femocrat creator.*

According to this femocrat creator, later in our discussion, this cultural reference is rooted in the historical age of the Vikings when people lived in hardship, and worked collectively for survival. Icelandic creators believe that the historical Viking period has been translated to the modern times to some degree. One of the issues most frequently spoken of was women’s independence. Icelandic women have been framed as strong women by all the Icelandic creators, which they argue stems from the need to be independent in the harsh environment in the past:

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<sup>38</sup> Original quote: “Ég hef búið erlendis í 5 ár og upplifir Ísland úr fjarska. Og mér finnst þegar maður upplifir úr fjarska að þá sér maður betur þarna, manúna í íslensku samfélagi. Þetta er svolítið manískt samfélag, það kemur einhver hugmynd upp og allir bara: Já gerum þetta!. Ég meina sumir eru úti í heila nótt í rigningu til að fá crispy cream kleinuhring sko til að vera nr.1 í því. En allir fara í Costco, ég meina þetta er bara manía. Þanngi að þegar að það kemur einhver hugmynd og ef hún nær fótfestu eins og með jafnréttið, allir bara: Já gerum jafnrétti!”

*“Because we are with so few [inhabitants], we could not afford not utilizing our workforce. Throughout the course of time, we have just had to. Women had to work, they had to see to important tasks which may have been a man’s function in other countries. Historically, women have always been strong figures”* (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>39</sup> femocrat creator.

These Viking women have come to serve as role models for Icelandic women today:

*“C: Yes, I mean, why is there such tolerance towards strong women here? If we just look at Icelandic history, our history then we, of course, have Hallgerði Langbrók [Viking heroine]. We have all these amazing women that one can look up to, and you know they have made some great changes in that respect. They have been able to mainstream the image of the strong woman. That woman is to me in no way portrayed in a negative light from this historical perspective, such as Auður Djúpauðga.*

*I: Are you referring to Viking women?*

*C: Yes, women who have cleared the way for the rest. And then Vigdís Finnboga arrived of course, which was incredibly important. [...] I had never known another president than her. I just thought that every president should be female, I thought it was weird if they weren’t. Today it may not be such a direct power position, but I saw it that way. It is in a way very symbolic”* (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>40</sup> femocrat creator.

Furthermore, this femocrat creator mentions one of the role models which was acknowledged in all the 22 interviews I conducted in Iceland: Iceland’s first democratically elected female president Vigdís Finnbogadóttir. For many of the Icelandic creators, Vigdís was one of the biggest role models for women and girls as she presented herself as an equally capable candidate for presidency. Vigdís is said to have triggered social change:

*“C: I mean, the pioneering women did a fantastic job throughout the years, I mean we have had....I myself was a part of the ‘84 Kvinnafriðaginn [demonstration/event]. [...] you still remember the moments clearly. My first elections were Vigdís, that was the first time I was able to vote. I remember this was a major event. It may not seem as big today, or not as big rather. But this was a milestone we just took.*

*I: For role models?*

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<sup>39</sup> Original quote: “Af því að við erum svona fá, þá megum við ekki við því að nýta ekki vinnuaflið okkar. Og við höfum svoltið í gegnum tíðina bara þurft þess. Konur hafa bara þurft að vinna, þær hafa þurft að sinna mikilvægum verkefnum sem að hafa kannski verið karla hlutverk í örðum löndum. Og konur hafa í gegnum söguna alltaf verið sterkar”

<sup>40</sup> Original quote: “C: Já eða bara semsagt, afhverju það er svo mikið umburðarlyndi fyrir því að konur megi vera svoldið valdamiklar? En við erum náttúrulega með bara svona og ef við horfum bara á íslenska sögu, eða söguna okkar þá erum við náttúrulega með Hallgerði Langbrók. Við erum með þessar flottu konur sem að maður horfir til og hérna þú veist að þær hafa breytt alveg ótrúlega miklu. Þær hafa náð að mainstream-a svona þessa ímynd sterku konunnar. Og hún er ekki á neinn hátt neikvæð finnst mér einhvernvegin svona í sögulegu samhengi eins og Auður Djúpauðga...

I: Áttu við víkinga konur?

C: Já svona konur sem að bara, mér finnst eins og þær hafi svoltið rutt leiðina. Svo náttúrulega kemur Vigdís Finnboga, sem að skipti náttúrulega ótrúlega miklu máli. [...] ég meina ég þekki engan annan forseta en hana. Mér fannst bara að allar forsetar ættu að vera konur. Skrítið ef að það var ekki. Svo þetta er kannski ekki beinleiðis valdastaða svona þannig séð þá er þetta nú samt. Þá er þetta svona tákni”

*C: Yes, good role models that we have...and yes in some professions there is more equality now. I remember when I heard the news of the first female truck driver, or when a woman became a pilot. Now it is no longer news, it no longer feels strange. It has now become normal for us; which people abroad may still find odd. These are wonderful changes”* (resp. 07.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>41</sup> social creator.

*“It is quite a long story we have...but I mean then we get hit by a wave with Vigdís and other magnificent women who in a way break the glass ceiling in different sectors. Although it is relatively recent, I do however think that it brings it all together you know, like Kvinnafriðagurinn [demonstration/event] for example”* (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>42</sup> femocrat creator.

What can be drawn from these perspectives is the importance of having female role models in higher positions. A femocrat creator described these pioneering women as ‘snowplows’ for they ‘bulldoze’ the way for others to follow after their plow of high demands:

*“They are the **snowplows** you see. We have women that are completely leading the issues of equality both in Iceland and, well historically like Ingibjörg Sólrún [former prime minister], and the Women’s Party and those women. That may well be...I think that it is very important that it happens in all sectors”* (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>43</sup> femocrat creator.

These ‘snowplows’ were part of the revolution of creating an arena where it has become the norm to speak and act on gender equality, where a female president was normal. Another femocrat creator addressed a similar feeling of equality as a norm:

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<sup>41</sup> Original quote: “Ég meina svo er frábært starf eins og frumkvöðla í gegnum tíðina ég meina við höfum haft.... ég sjálfur fór niður í bæ ’84 á Kvinnafriðaginn. [...] En maður man eftir þessum mómentum all brautina. Mínar fyrstu kosningar voru Vigdís, það er fyrsta sinn sem ég fæ að kjósa. Og ég man að þetta var stór viðburður. Hann þætti ekki stór núna, eða alls ekki jafn stór einhvernvegin. En það eru svona milestones sem við höfum tekið.

I: Góðar fyrirmyndir?

C: Góðar fyrirmyndir og menn hafa ...já í sumum stéttum hefur orðið meira jafnrétti á bara allskonar stöðum. En maður man alveg fréttirnar þegar fyrsta konan var að keyra vörubíl eða þegar konan var flugmaður. Núna er það ekki lengur hérna, manni finnst það ekkert skrítið. Okkur finnst það núna eðlilegt en kannski finnst fólki það erlendis skrítið. Þetta eru dásamlegar breytingar”

<sup>42</sup> Original quote: “Það er alveg tillögulega löng saga sem við erum með ..... en ég meina svo kemur rosaleg alda með Vigdís með flottum konum sem brjóta svoltið glerþakið á ýmsum sviðum. Þó að það sé tiltölulegt nýlegt en ég held samt að svona, já þetta kemur einhvernvegin allt saman en eins og Kvinnafriðagurinn t.d”

<sup>43</sup> Original quote: “Þær eru svona snjóruðningstækin skilurðu. En svo erum við með svona konur sem eru algjörlega leiðandi í jafnréttismálum bæði á Íslandi, sögulega og eins og Ingibjörg Sólrún, og kvennalistinn og þær konur. Það getur vel verið að....ég held að það sé svo mikilvægt að, þetta gerist á öllum sviðum sko”

*“This is just like, I think we have arrived at that point that we have maybe started changing some norms. Some things have started moving. Something is not portrayed as normal as it used to be. There are some displacements”* (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>44</sup> femocrat creator.

This cultural change spoken of in this example is not something that any policy or legislation can implement. That is something that only the masses can control. The policies and legislation can, however, be influenced by strong forces which one social creator claims goes beyond the Viking roots. This social creator explains how the society portrays women equal to men. The creator also stressed that there is a certain strength amongst the Icelandic people to strive for equality as it has become the norm:

*“I am not saying that there is something in the water or in the air or the Vikings or something like that. It is just that there were magnificent people that came before the Women’s Meeting, Women’s Day Off, Vigdís and the Women’s Party. This is what has the most formative effect on us I believe. I mean for myself [...] this was all part of my upbringing. I just see this as, or this has resulted in us seeing gender equality as a norm. I think that just may be it”* (resp. 17.01.2018, Iceland)<sup>45</sup> social creator.

As this social creator shows, the achievements by feminist’s initiatives in Iceland has had a great impact on society as a whole. Furthermore, the creator argues that these initiatives have changed the discourse:

*“Of course we want everyone to be equal. There are men and women, disabled and non-disabled. It is just being an individual and believing in the good in people. We do not say ‘You are better, and you are worse’. We do not even say that to our children, let alone strangers. We believe that everyone has equal rights, that is the main discourse, it is so normal”* (resp. 17.01.2018, Iceland)<sup>46</sup> social creator.

Interestingly, all the Icelandic creators were convinced of the strength in their fellow compatriots in promoting equality. What they did not mention, however, are the religious influences on the success of gender equality in the country. The Icelandic creators did not reflect on the role of religion in society during the interviews, as the society itself is fairly secular. There is another kind of belief within

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<sup>44</sup> Original quote: “Þetta er bara svona, ég held að við séum komin á þann stað að við erum kannski svona kannski farin að breyta einhverjum normum. Það er eitthvað farið að færast til. Eitthvað þykir ekki vera jafn eðlilegt og það þótti áður. Það er einhver tilfærsla”

<sup>45</sup> Original quote: “Ég ætla ekki að segja að það sé eitthvað í vatninu eða loftinu eða víkingarnir eða eitthvað svoleiðis. Það er bara öflugt fólk sem horfir á undan með kvennafundinum, kvennafrídeginum Vigdís, Kvennalistinn. Þetta er það sem er með mest mótandi áhrif á okkur held ég og ég meina fyrir mig [...] ég elst upp við þessu, ég sé þetta bara, þetta gerir það að verkum að manni finnst það sjálfsagt að karlar og konur séu jafnir. Þannig að ég held að það sé bara það”

<sup>46</sup>Original quote: “Auðvitað viljum við að allir séu jafnir. Það eru karlar og konur, fatlaðir og ófatlaðir. Það er bara það að vera manneskja og trú á hið góða í fólki. Við segjum ekki „Þú ert betri og þú ert lakaðari“. Ekki frekar að við segjum það við börnin okkar. Þannig að við trúum að allir eigi að eiga sama rétt. Það hlýtur að vera orðræða. Það er svo sjálfsagt”

Icelandic society, the belief in the good in people for collective social change. This has been claimed to be one of the factors why Iceland has topped the international charts in gender equality:

*“We believe in ourselves, we are humble. If the will is at hand, we work collectively to change everything. I am very optimistic about the future because we are so positive towards social responsibility”* (resp. 13.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>47</sup> social creator.

The excerpts argue against McRobbie’s (2009) notion of post-feminism. What is evident in Icelandic society is the solidarity that is needed to pursue issues of gender equality and the gendered awareness. This is described by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) to be a pivotal factor for change. The femocrat creators in this section also describe their feminist attributes and engage with the feminist agenda in their working environment. Corresponding with Findlay’s (2015) argument of integrating special gender expertise in the field of governance. What stands out is the specific role of women in top-functions as role models for the rest of Icelandic society which triggers collective social changes. In contrast to the Dutch context, the Dutch creators argue that they need more female role models.

## **The Netherlands**

The Dutch creators have other kinds of influential factors in their society. According to the Dutch creators, the Netherlands has a strong religious tradition which influences gender roles, not only in society but also in the political arena. The power of religious parties has been strong since their rise in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This aspect is still visible in the conservative ideas of the family formation such as the ‘stay at home mom’, when children are born:

*“I see it here with girlfriends around me that when there is a (child) then they work one day less. A few girlfriends just got a second child and then they work another day less...then I think yeah ... pf ... that is really starting to get normal in the Netherlands”* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>48</sup> social creator.

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*“C: There is also something like the culture in the Netherlands. In the Netherlands, the ideal image of a mother is still that she is at home with her children. The image of a mother that works full-time in the Netherlands, well then, the quality of her motherhood is questioned. That is quite dominant in the Netherlands.  
I: Is it still like that?”*

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<sup>47</sup>Original quote: “Höfum mikla trú á okkur, erum hógvær. Höfum mikla samvinnu, ef viljinn er til staðar þá er hægt að breyta öllu. Ég er mjög bjartsýn á framtíðina af því við erum svo jákvæð gagnvart samfélagslegri ábyrgð”

<sup>48</sup> Original quote: “Ik zie het hier bij vriendinnen om me heen dat ze, dan komt er een (kind) en dan gaan ze een dag minder werken. Een paar vriendinnen hebben net een 2e kindje en dan gaan ze nog een dag minder werken..dan denk ik jaah... pf... dat is echt in Nederland een beetje normaal zeg maar aan het worden”

*C: Yes, I think so. It may be slightly less than in the past, but still relatively accurate. So, if you work part-time then you are a bad mom. That is very powerful...if everyone around you thinks that, then it is not weird at all. So, speaking of freedom of choice...”* (resp. 05.04.18, The Netherlands)<sup>49</sup> femocrat creator.

What these examples illustrate is the tradition of the (neo)liberal rhetoric of “keuzevrijheid” by Dutch politics which translates to ‘freedom of choice’ as one of the femocrat creators later expanded on with an example:

*“Our children are raised really well, but [a small group of women] were really not at home full-time. But that is something that we find really difficult in the Netherlands, that is not so bad that we find it difficult to be compelling about individual choices. Because we think that is really a good thing that we can make that choice, but the consequence is that women make choices that are not necessarily good for them in the long run. That’s true”* (resp. 05.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>50</sup> femocrat creator.

After this became clear in the first few interviews, I deliberately asked the creators to reflect on freedom of choice in relation to the participation of women in the labour market. When Dutch creators were asked why women and men have a different status in society, and more specifically in the labour market, a unanimous answer appeared: ‘Because we are the champions in part-time labour (of women)’:

*“At the same time, the Netherlands also insists that there are really people who are proud that we are part-time champions because it gives a better work/life balance. Of course, there is something to be said for that. Were it not that mainly women work part-time. If that would be divided equally then this could be how we like to organize the Netherlands. We would like to have the time and opportunity to take care of other things in our lives. But practice tells us that it is mainly women who work part-time. The result is that they are often not economically independent”* (resp. 05.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>51</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>49</sup> Original quote: “C: Ja er is ook nog iets als de cultuur in Nederland. In Nederland is het ideaalbeeld van een moeder is wel nog steeds dat ze veel thuis is bij haar kinderen. Het beeld in Nederland van een moeder die fulltime werkt is, dan zetten ze wel vraagtekens bij de kwaliteit van haar moederschap. Dat is heel dominant in Nederland. I: Is dat nog steeds zo?”

C: Ja volgens mij wel. Het is misschien minder dan een tijd geleden maar wel nog relatief veel. Dus als je fulltime werkt ben je een slechte moeder. Dat is heel krachtig ...als iedereen om je heen dat vind, is het echt niet zo raar. Dus over vrije keuze gesproken...”

<sup>50</sup> Original quote: “Onze kinderen zijn echt wel opgevoed, maar [klein clubje vrouwen] waren echt niet fulltime thuis. Maar dat is wel, wat wij in Nederland echt moeilijk vinden, dat is ook niet zo erg dat wij dat moeilijk vinden, is om dwingend te zijn over individuele keuzes. Want wij vinden dat echt een groot goed, dat wij die keuze kunnen maken, maar de consequentie daarvan dat vrouwen keuzes maken die niet perse op de langere termijn goed voor hun zijn. Dat is zo”

<sup>51</sup> Original quote: “Tegelijkertijd hechten er in Nederland ook wel aan, er zijn echt mensen die er trots zijn dat wij kampioen deeltijdwerken zijn, omdat het een betere work/life balance zou geven. Daar is natuurlijk best iets voor te zeggen. Ware het niet dat het voornamelijk vrouwen zijn die in deeltijd werken. Als dat nou gelijk verdeeld zou zijn dan zou kunnen dat dit manier is hoe wij Nederland graag ons arbeidsleven inrichten. Wij willen graag de tijd en gelegenheid hebben om te zorgen of andere dingen met ons leven te doen. Maar de praktijk leert ons dat het



This economic dependency of women is thought to be a great issue. One of the femocrat creators even argued that the inequality between men and women stems from a social norm of unequal opportunities and not the freedom of choice as it is often portrayed:

*“I am convinced ... but that is a conviction, not a fact or something ... but I think the difference between men and women is a social norm. It is not a free choice. No, there are not many women who want to work full-time. Within the current context, women state: this is my own decision, I have chosen this for and by myself. That is how they experience it. That is definitely true. So, you can see it as a free choice. But I say: it is not a free choice, it is a social norm that women tend to a lot of caring tasks for their families and the social norm is that men have to earn a lot of money”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>52</sup> femocrat creator.

This part-time model is according to the Dutch creators a strong cultural factor that has a major effect on women’s position in society. The current cabinet has made it clear that their biggest concern at the moment is to make sure that women expand on their working hours according to a femocrat creator. It has been argued to be one of the biggest issues of Dutch gender equality policies by the Dutch creators as the following example:

*“I: You just mentioned that women’s part-time work was THE problem of emancipation.  
C: Well, yes ... THE part is a bit difficult, but I would say a part of the problem.  
I: But how do you see that? Why is that the problem?  
C: Ehm, yes, indeed, why is that a problem. Because a) men do not do it, that is obviously a clear problem. Because if everyone would work less. Well not everyone, but if that would just be divided equally between men and women then it would just be an individual choice of that person. And of course, it is not true, I would not say that from an emancipation perspective, but a part of the government’s policy says: the participation in the labour market must simply be as high as possible, so the best thing would be that everyone would just start working full-time. That is part of the government policy. But that is of course not the emancipation aspect of it. Economically, there are all kinds of arguments for this. But from the perspective of emancipation, there is enormous inequality between men and women. And because women in the Netherlands almost all work part-time ... well, I am exaggerating it a bit ... but it is the vast majority. A standard week for men is full-time and the standard working week for women is perhaps 3 days. And that does lead to immense inequality, also in career opportunities, for example”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>53</sup> femocrat creator.

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voornamelijk vrouwen zijn die in deeltijd werken. Het gevolg daarvan is dat ze vaak niet economisch zelfstandig zijn”

<sup>52</sup> Original quote: “Ik ben er van overtuigd...maar dat is een overtuiging he, dat is niet een feit ofzo... maar ik denk dat het verschil tussen mannen en vrouwen een maatschappelijke norm is. Het is geen vrije keus. Nee er zijn niet zo heel veel vrouwen die fulltime willen werken. Binnen de huidige context geven vrouwen aan: dit is mijn eigen beslissing, ik heb dit zelf gekozen. Zo ervaren ze het. Dat is zeker waar. Dus je kunt het zien als vrije keus. Maar ik zeg: het is geen vrije keus het is een maatschappelijke norm dat vrouwen veel zorg aan hun gezin besteden en maatschappelijke norm is dat mannen heel veel geld moeten verdienen”

<sup>53</sup> Original quote: I: Je noemde net dat het deeltijd werken van vrouwen HET emancipatie probleem was.

C: Nou, ja... HET is een beetje moeilijk, maar een beetje dat zou ik wel zeggen.

I: Maar hoe zie je dat dan? Waarom is dat het probleem?

All the quotes above give a clear vision of the current emphasis on women's participation in the labour market as the main issue of gender equality in the Netherlands. Generally, the Dutch creators feel like a left-winged environment is more receptive to the ideas for improvement, instead of working hours being stimulated (increased). In other words, the emphasis is very market-oriented and framed in a neoliberal rhetoric of right-winged conservative politics (resp. 15.03.2018, The Netherlands; 03.04.2018, The Netherlands). The reason it has escalated towards the more conservative scope, they believe, is the rise of populism. While crawling out of a crisis, people are often more prone to listen to practical (nationalist) solutions than direct their attention towards the discrimination of the marginalized (resp. 03.04.18, The Netherlands). These solutions are then often presented like the Netherlands are progressing in some way, while still holding on to conservative values which are not always what they seem:

*"We are a bit ... more conservative. Or we think that we are doing very well but that is quite disappointing"* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>54</sup> social creator.

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*"That is also the image we have in the Netherlands. That in the Netherlands everything is arranged very well, that we have every opportunity"* (resp. 01.03.2018a, The Netherlands)<sup>55</sup> social creator.

The conservative trend does not emerge from itself as stressed by a femocrat creator. The democratic system will include Christian parties as long as their votes keep coming in, holding on to the ideologies of the traditional family patterns which influences the Dutch policies and legislation:

*"Yes, it is of course conservative. Yes, it is. And it is, of course, the Christian parties that often have a more traditional image of families. Well image, ideal. And they get voted, I mean, they can not suddenly appear like: I explain it to them and then they get it and then"*

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C: Ehm, ja nou inderdaad, waarom is dat een probleem. Omdat a) mannen het niet doen, dat is natuurlijk al een duidelijk probleem. Want als iedereen korter zou werken. Nou ja niet iedereen, maar als dat gewoon gelijk verdeeld zou zijn over mannen en vrouwen dan zou het gewoon een individuele keuze zijn van die persoon. En het is natuurlijk niet zo, ik zou niet vanuit emancipatie zeggen dat ja...een deel van het kabinetsbeleid zegt wel: de arbeidsparticipatie moet gewoon zowiezo zo hoog mogelijk zijn, dus het mooiste zou zijn dat iedereen gewoon fulltime zou gaan werken. Dat vind een deel van het kabinetsbeleid. Maar dat is natuurlijk niet het emancipatie aspect daarvan. Economisch zijn daar misschien allerlei argumenten voor. Maar vanuit emancipatie is het een enorme ongelijkheid tussen man en vrouwen. En omdat vrouwen in Nederland bijna allemaal in deeltijd werken... nou ik overdrijf het een beetje maar... het is toch wel de overgrote meerderheid. Een standaard week voor mannen is voltijds en de standaard werkweek voor vrouwen is misschien 3 dagen. En dat leidt toch wel tot heel veel ongelijkheid, ook in carrièrekansen bijvoorbeeld"

<sup>54</sup> Original quote: "We zijn wel een stuk..ja conservatiever. Of denken dat we het heel goed doen maar dat valt best wel tegen"

<sup>55</sup> Original quote: "Nee maar dat is ook ergens ook het beeld dat we over Nederland hebben. Dat in Nederland is het heel goed geregeld, we hebben alle kansen"

*they get rid of it. No, that is their principle and their voters have also gotten them there. So, they can not drop it”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>56</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“C: There are of course a lot of women who still work and do other things ... but still, the caring task is somehow more often linked to the woman and even if we can say that it does not, then we still find it a kind, yes there is still a traditional image. I: In the Netherlands?”*

*C: Yes, in the Netherlands. And with men, that is, with men you also see... I have friends for example who take 3 months parental leave and the gross of their male colleagues says: ‘Well, sissy ... you are you really going to do that? You still have to make money’ A lot of that ... well, we’ve seen so many nice examples [...] not only how it is in the Netherlands but also, well, how stereotyping is still evident worldwide. And that just has a lot of influence on policy here too”* (resp. 28.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>57</sup> social creator.

Here the conservative aspect of the Dutch culture is clearly articulated as being formed by traditional gender roles of women as caretakers and men as breadwinners. It seems to affect women more than men in the labour market according to the creators, although in the second example men are indeed affected by the gender roles as well. That feeling of ‘being on the right track, but in reality, it is disappointing’ was also apparent while discussing the topic of the Global Gender Gap Index, an index that ranks the Netherlands in 32<sup>nd</sup> position. When asked about the ranking, most of the creators made comparisons to other countries:

*“[The Netherlands lags behind on an international basis and] according to the rankings quite a bit. We rank at 32 and that is interesting to see. I think it was **Rwanda**, or all other countries that in my opinion, we are a little higher developed in all areas. Like my goodness, there are a lot of countries that can pass us by, so we are really low in the ranks”* (resp. 01.03.2018b, The Netherlands)<sup>58</sup> social creator.

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<sup>56</sup> Original quote: “Ja het is natuurlijk conservatief. Ja dat is het. En het is natuurlijk met de Christelijke partijen dan hebben we vaak een traditioneler beeld over gezinnen. Nou beeld, ideaal. En daar zijn ze op gekozen, ik bedoel, ze kunnen niet ineens maar verschijnen van: ik kom ze het maar even uitleggen en dan snappen ze het en dan stappen ze er van af. Nee dat is hun principe en daar zijn hun kiezers hebben hun daar ook op gekozen. Dus ze kunnen het niet allemaal laten varen”

<sup>57</sup> Original quote: “C: Er zijn natuurlijk heel veel vrouwen die er wel nog bij werken en nog andere dingen doen...maar toch, die zorg komt toch sneller bij de vrouw en ook al kunnen we zeggen van niet, dan vinden we ook toch nog een soort, ja het is nog steeds wel een traditioneel beeld. I: In Nederland?”

C: Ja in Nederland. En bij mannen is dat, bij mannen zie je ook wel...ik heb vrienden bijvoorbeeld die dan 3 maanden ouderschapsverlof nemen en het gros van hun mannelijke collega's zegt: 'Nou, mietje..dat ga je toch niet doen? Je moet toch geld verdienen?'. Heel veel van die ..ja we hebben zoveel mooie voorbeelden gezien [...] niet alleen hoe het in Nederland is maar ook, nou ja hoe die stereotypering wereldwijd nog is. En dat heeft gewoon heel veel invloed ook nog op beleid hier”

<sup>58</sup> Original quote: “[Nederland loopt achter op internationale basis en] volgens de rankings behoorlijk wat. We staan op 32 en dan is het wel interessant om te zien. Volgens mij was het Rwanda of allemaal andere landen die in mijn opinie wij toch iets hoger ontwikkeld is op alle vlakken. Van jeetje, er zijn dus een hoop landen dat ons voorbij kunnen streven dus we zijn echt wel laag op die schaal”

*“Those measurements are simply incorrect. Because, for example, **Georgia**, where gender equality is not a reality, scores better in business than we do which they are not”* (resp. 01.03.2018c, The Netherlands)<sup>59</sup> social creator.

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*“With some things, you notice very clearly that there is some difference. It has also been mentioned that the Dutch nr 32 on the Global index, that we have **Nepal** above us. But then we are just as bad. That is also something that we should not look forward to. That is also a bit: What do you look at in that gap, do you still take the absolute level with you? And if you just look at whether you are equal ... and I've done that sometimes. And I think that there is an argument in itself, that you just look at equality. If nobody gets the chance to know what, then you end up equal and then perhaps equal to the Netherlands. But when it comes to the point of: ‘in which country do you want to live in?’ we all already know [the answer to that]. It has some value to look purely at the difference. But then you have to look carefully, because what does that say about the quality of life? The quality of living working care”* (resp. 08.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>60</sup> academic creator.

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*“I remember when that was published by the World Economic Forum, and that we were critical of it because of health and survival: because they look at the gender gap. But in the Netherlands people are generally very healthy when you look at the rest of the world. And in **Rwanda**, for example, the gender gap is not as great, but that is because figuratively speaking, everyone dies when they are 60. You could question whether women would be happier to die at the same age as men at 57 or that you have a longer healthier life”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>61</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“If you compare us to other countries, we are not worse off in the Netherlands. For me, that also stands out on the UN level. If you speak with women from **Africa** or the **Arab region** then we are of course also ... well, then that is well. It was also in those weeks that we were [at convention] that in **Brazil** a politician was murdered because they ... that with, well I also stood at a rally with the **Filipino** embassy because there are all human rights activists on terrorists' lists. Well ... you know that does not happen here. And if you see it from that perspective, then we are just really very good that we have our government, that*

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<sup>59</sup> Original quote: “Die metingen kloppen gewoon niet. Want bijvoorbeeld Georgië, waar de gendergelijkheid niet groot is die scoort dus gewoon in business beter dan wij terwijl dat helemaal niet zo is”

<sup>60</sup> Original quote: “Bij sommige dingen merk je wel heel duidelijk dat er wel wat verschil is. Er wordt ook wel eens over die Nederlandse nr 32 op de Global index gezegd, dan staat er Nepal iets boven ons. Maar dan zijn we gelijk in slecht zijn. Dat is ook iets waar we niet naar uit moeten kijken. Dat is ook wel een beetje: Waar kijk je naar in die gap, neem je nog het absolute niveau nog mee? En als je nou puur kijkt naar sta je gelijk...en dat heb ik ook wel eens gedaan. En ik vind dat er op zich wel een argument daar is te vinden dat je puur kijkt naar de gelijkheid. Als niemand de kansen krijgt naar god weet wat, dan eindig je ook gelijk en dan misschien blijkbaar met Nederland. Maar als het gaat over: ‘in welk land wil jij wonen?’ Weten we het ook wel? Het heeft een waarde om puur naar het verschil te kijken. Maar je moet vervolgens wel weer goed kijken, want wat zegt dat over het kwaliteit van leven? De kwaliteit van wonen werken zorg”

<sup>61</sup> Original quote: “Want ik weet nog toen dat uitkwam van World Economic Forum, en dat we daar wel kritisch op waren omdat die health and survival: want ze kijken naar de gender gap. Maar in Nederland zijn mensen in het algemeen heel erg gezond, als je kijkt naar de rest van de wereld. En in Rwanda is bijvoorbeeld de gender gap minder groot maar dat komt omdat iedereen bewijs van spreken dood gaat als ze 60 zijn. Je kon er wel wat vraagtekens bij stellen of vrouwen daar nou gelukkiger van worden dat je net als mannen op je 57 dood gaat of dat je langer in gezondheid leeft ofzo”

*the government even pays us for their accountability, to ensure that they are accountable”* (resp. 28.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>62</sup> social creator.

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*“Ehm I think a kind of idea prevails in the Netherlands, not in our department, but in general that we have already achieved it [equality]. Yes, so that you at some point, because we have always been a forerunner. We are still one of the countries where it goes well compared to the rest of the world. As a woman in the Netherlands, it is a relatively nice place to live and you get more opportunities, or you have more opportunities than in other countries. But there is an idea that emancipation can only go in that direction”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>63</sup> femocrat creator.

According to these excerpts, the Dutch creators focus on the Netherlands’ international position on the Global Gender Gap Index compared to ‘underdeveloped’ countries and claim that the Netherlands are better off than other countries situated in the Global South. From the discourse analysis of the interviews, these creators seem to be showcasing is a colonial comparison, rooted in the Dutch colonial progressive ideology. The colonial comparison derives from an ideology on modernity and progression theorized by both Mohanty ([1986] 2002) and Lugones (2010). As mentioned in the section on intersectionality in the theoretical chapter, both Mohanty ([1986] 2002) and Lugones (2010) describe the imperialistic ideology that divides the Global North with the Global South. Here the quality of life was distinguished from the position of the country in either a superior or subordinate position through a hierarchical comparison. The Dutch creators seem to apply this colonial comparison by comparing their quality of life to other countries who seemingly have poorer living conditions. More specifically, the creators situate the Netherlands as superior to the ‘less progressive’ countries to show how inaccurate the Global Gender Gap Index really is according to them<sup>64</sup>. Again, I do not claim their responses as defensive or representative of their way thinking altogether. As argued in the methodological section, interviews are brief interactions which may or may not reflect on the respondents’ general beliefs. It may well be that the Dutch creators only wanted to rephrase the shortcomings by articulating the issues the Netherlands were exceeding in and illustrating the amounts of steps the Dutch government needs to take on an

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<sup>62</sup> Original quote: “Als je ons vergelijkt met andere landen zijn wij in Nederland niet slecht af. En dat valt me dan ook weer op VN niveau. Als je dan spreekt met vrouwen uit Afrika, of Arabische regio dan zitten wij natuurlijk ook ...nou ja dan is dat jahh. Het was ook in die weken dat we daar zaten dat er in Brazilië een politica wordt vermoord omdat ze ...dat er met, nou ik heb bij een rally gestaan bij de Filipijnse ambassade omdat er allemaal mensenrechtenactivisten op terroristen lijsten staan. Nou ja ...weet je dat gebeurt hier niet. En als je zo kijkt dan hebben we het gewoon echt heel goed dat wij gewoon onze overheid, dat de overheid ons zelfs betaald om gewoon accountable, te zorgen dat ze accountable zijn”

<sup>63</sup> Original quote: “Ehm ik denk dat er een soort idee heerst in Nederland, niet bij onze directie maar over het algemeen wel dat we het al geregeld hebben. Ja dus dat je op een gegeven moment, want wij zijn altijd voorloper geweest, en we zijn nog steeds een van de landen waar het goed gaat vergeleken met de rest van de wereld. Als vrouw in Nederland is het een relatief een fijne plek om te wonen en krijg je meer kansen of heb je meer kansen dan in andere landen. Maar er is wel een idee dat emancipatie alleen maar zo kan gaan”

<sup>64</sup> This does not mean that they apply the colonial comparative methods in their everyday/working lives. This is only a recorded moment of the interview. This also differs among creators. The femocrat creators made it clear that they speak from the position and vision of the ministry in some cases, which makes their comments on the matter questionable whether they speak their own mind or that of the ministry.

international level. The government is however, according to the creators, not eager in taking bigger steps towards the progression of gender equality. One of the femocrat creators argued that the Dutch government is arrogant in following international inquiries, claiming they were not suited for their situation. This is something the femocrat creator was trying to change:

*“That does not happen as much [i.e using international guidelines for policies]. Actually, I encourage to do more because the Netherlands have always thought of it with a certain **arrogance**: we are already doing well, and all those international monitoring mechanisms are more for other countries. I try to make it clear: No, we have to follow those recommendations and we have to implement the political commitments that we have signed in New York, which we must also implement in the Netherlands. So, I would say that it derives more from national politics”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>65</sup> femocrat creator.

What this excerpt shows is how the Dutch government relies on the national politics when it comes to formulating new policies, which can be linked to their own superior positionality. Interestingly, when asked about the Netherlands’ status on an international level, some Dutch social creators articulated the traces of this colonial framework in other sectors, such as the humanitarian sector:

*“Colonialism. We still have the same attitude, that you know I think that the Netherlands as a whole. Because I have asked myself the question many times throughout the years and I have been able to come down to the conclusion that it is still the attitude of colonialism. I have been working for the past, well since before I graduated, for a lot of NGO’s and associations, and I keep seeing that same attitude no matter how well intended the work is. Especially in the humanitarian sector. It is like: ‘let’s show this country how we learned to do it in the Netherlands, let’s show the world how the Netherlands can be you know a leader. There is just this **arrogance** I think because we are probably one of the wealthiest nations in the world and we still like to believe that we have a superior position”* (resp. 26.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>66</sup> social creator.

The social creator believes that this narrative is biased due to the reformulation of the historical period of colonialism as ‘The Golden Age’. This bias, according to the social creator, is passed on to children in secondary school which apparently sticks with people into their adult lives as the previous quotes have shown. The social creator continues by saying people are ignorant but that it may not be their fault directly:

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<sup>65</sup> Original quote: “Dat gebeurt juist weinig [using international guidelines for policies]. Eigenlijk probeer ik dat [...] meer te doen omdat we als Nederland ook met een bepaalde arrogantie altijd hebben gedacht: wij doen het wel goed, en al die internationale monitoring mechanismen zijn meer voor andere landen. Probeer ik juist duidelijk te maken van: nee we moeten die aanbevelingen gaan opvolgen en we moeten die politieke commitment die we in New York hebben of zijn aangegaan, die moeten we ook in Nederland implementeren. Dus [het komt] juist meer vanuit de nationale politiek zou ik zeggen”

<sup>66</sup> Interview was conducted in English.

*“[people are] ignorant and just... I mean from one side I definitely don't want to excuse it because I am really critical of my country, but at the same time I do understand that it is like when you start studying gender and your eyes open and you think: oh my God, now I have to accept basically my white shame and all the things I have done. So, I think as a country, the Netherlands is just completely unable to do that. Also, because we are so fragmented. But it is no excuse”* (resp. 26.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>67</sup> social creator.

Here the social creator indicates the importance of the gender knowledge, corresponding with Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay's (2015) argument of the importance of gender expertise as one of the key issues for the progression of gender equality policies.

What binds the excerpts together is the current culture in the Netherlands that has been described with certain attributes that relate to the expression “Doe normaal” which translates to “Be normal” (resp. 26.03.2018, The Netherlands). But what is normal in the Dutch context? According to the social creators, it means not stray too much from the norm which contradict to their superior status on an international level:

*“‘Doe normaal’. Dutch people on one side are very dramatic, but they do not want to be perceived as being very dramatic. They want everybody to stay in line. The expression: ‘je kop boven het maaiveld uitsteken’ do you know that one?*

*I: No*

*C: It means like: putting your head above the field. So, this goes back to the farmer's time. They do not like that because then your head would be cut off.*

*I: What does that mean?*

*C: It gets cut off if you put your head up because you differentiate yourself too much. So, in that sense, that is why Dutch people do not like you to brag too much about your accomplishments. In the Netherland you have got to be humble”* (resp. 26.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>68</sup> social creator.

What the social creator describes here is the attitude the Dutch have towards being ordinary which contradicts the exceptional status the creators seem to give the Netherlands on an international scale. What the social creator addresses here is that at the one hand the Dutch are internationally exceptional compared to the ‘underdeveloped’ countries in the Global South, while at the other hand, everyone within that country needs to stay the same or simply be ‘normal’.

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<sup>67</sup> Interview was conducted in English.

<sup>68</sup> Interview was conducted in English.

## *Summary*

This subsection described the Icelandic and Dutch societies in relation to its history, culture, politics and religion from the perspectives of the creators. What both countries have in common according to the creators is the how the historical traces from the countries' past seems to play a role in the success of gender equality policies as well as cultural, religious and political factors.

The Icelandic culture was described as island oriented, with a small population, and a great deal of social control. It is the sense of justice and righteousness which is according to the creator's something that is in their DNA from the Viking times. The Viking culture was frequently mentioned by the Icelandic creators as an aspect of modern-day Icelandic culture. The force in society is built upon the harsh conditions of the Viking age, both women and men needed to work together to survive, and that mentality still lingers in society. It is also in this period that the creators believe the strength of the women derives from. Women are described to be politically strong, and active role models. The number of inhabitants was a frequent theme throughout the interviews. The size of the Icelandic society is important because of the social control of 'everyone knowing everyone', which makes certain issues easy to realize. What did not come up at all in the Icelandic interviews is the role of religious influences in both society and politics, something that plays a large role in the Netherlands.

The Dutch society is described by the creators as conservative and under the influence of Christianity. These influences affect the political environment and women's participation in the labour market according to the creators. The conservative and yet liberal environment in the Netherlands has led to a drop on international indexes such as the Global Gender Gap Index. The creators' answers on why they plummeted from 16 to 32 in the ranks are made in comparison with underdeveloped countries in the Global South. Considering Mohantys' ([1986] 2002) and Lugones' (2010) argument of the categorization of countries in terms of modernity, the Dutch creators' description of the Netherlands exceeding other countries frames their country as superior<sup>69</sup>. This description contradicts the attitude towards the behaviour of the general public in the Netherlands. The part-time culture and the mentality of 'gewoon doen' (a mentality of being ordinary and not standing out) may be one of the reasons why there is lack of solidarity among the Dutch people. The lack of solidarity is explored to further extend in the next section which is devoted to the roles and co-operation of the women's movement, government and the academia: the feminist triangle.

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<sup>69</sup> The Dutch femocrat creators' loyalty to their position as civil servants during the interviews often times made the analysis complex and put the visions of the ministry of imperialist superiority in question.



## **The creators' conceptualization of the role of the feminist triangle**

*The government, the women's movement, and the academia*

In this section, the roles of the government, women's movement and integration of academic knowledge are discussed in relation to how the creators describe each role in advancing gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands. A co-operation between the creators in this triangle is believed to be crucial for the sustainability of gender equality policies according to Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) and Verloo and Lombardo (2007). This 'alliance' so to say, should be based on mutual efforts in their different roles: the women's movement should serve as a watchdog or accountability mechanism for the government's policies (Woodward 2003; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Hannan 2013). The government should have feminist bureaucrats /femocrats within their institutions guiding the agenda from within the institutions (Gouws 1996). These femocrats should according to Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay (2015) possess over specific knowledge from the academic field as well bringing the academic experts into the triangle. Combined this triangle forms an establishment for the sustainability of gender equality policies.

### ***Role of the government***

The first section is devoted to how the creators see the role of the government in the feminist triangle. The Icelandic and Dutch creators get a separate section each in where they discuss how they see the role of the government in securing gender equality.

### **Iceland**

In Iceland, there is a general consensus among the creators that the government should intervene with special measures when it comes to enhancing the position of women and men in Icelandic society. The most prominent example given by all the creators was that the government ought to be a role model, govern and set the rules with legislation and policies:

*"I think it is justifiable in most cases. Because somehow history and the numbers show that the changes do not come of their own accord and that there is somehow no incentive for the changes to be made. In these cases, I think it is justifiable for the government to intervene if it is a human rights issue, for example, cases or issues that we can all agree on. I think, I mean it can be an arguable matter on how to implement such measure...what measures are good to take, but somehow, they lead us to where we want to go. I think that is justifiable that the government intervenes for the minority population"* (resp.08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>70</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>70</sup> Original quote: "Mér finnst það yfirleitt réttlátanlegt já. Af því að það bendir einhvernvegin sagan og tölurnar benda til þess að það verða ekki til breytingar að sjálfu sér og það er einhvernvegin enginn hvati til þess að það verði breytingar, þá finnst mér alveg réttlátanlegt að ríkið grípi inn í, ef þetta er eitthvað svona mannréttindamál,

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*“I have become more convinced about it through my working experiences that a few years ago it would have been enough to say that we want equality and then people would just work that way. But now I see more clearly that compelling methods are required to force us towards equality. With parental leave, when that was open then the women took the leave. Men had to be forced to take parental leave to be equal. We needed legislation for corporate governance. We need a legislation on equal wages, it just takes a lot of enforcing action to achieve this”* (resp. 17.01.2018, Iceland)<sup>71</sup> social creator.

As this latter example shows, the social creator explains that compelling measures are indeed required.

A femocrat creator answers to why that is the case:

*“Law enforcement is needed because it did not work otherwise. It would be better if the legislation could be avoided to achieve these results. The quality of a society cannot be measured by the number of legislative acts; but if legalization is the only way, then so be it. The man is, of course, just a faulty creature”* (resp. 18.12.2017b, Iceland)<sup>72</sup> femocrat creator.

The man is here framed as being a faulty creature, according to the femocrat creator. The creator further stresses that the quality of a society cannot be measured through legislation, which puts the role of the government in a questionable state. Other creators did however not question the role of the government:

*“I think that everyone shares some responsibility, but the responsibility of the government is great, so is the role of leaders. Then again, everybody needs to tag along”* (resp. 17.01.2018, Iceland)<sup>73</sup> social creator.

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*“C: So, in some way, I believe that the government is ahead, and shows certain leadership and their leadership talents.*

*I: A position of responsibility?*

*C: Yes, to some degree. But I mean they just need to revise the category of sexual offenses, where they need to get their act together and start all over.*

*I: The criminal offense law?*

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einhver mál sem við getum öll verið sammála um. [...] Ég held að, ég meina það má deila um hvernig eigi að útfæra þessar aðgerðir...hvaða aðgerðir séu góðar og hérna, einhvernvegin leiða okkur þangað sem við viljum fara. En ég held að það sé alveg réttlæt看legt að stjórnvöld beiti sér fyrir semsagt minnihlutahópa”

<sup>71</sup> Original quote: “En ég svona hef verið að sannfærast um það meira og meira í gegnum mín störf að fyrir nokkrum árum hefði verið nóg að segja það að við viljum jafnrétti og þá hljóta menn að vinna þannig. En þá er ég alltaf að sjá það betur og betur að það þarf þvingandi aðferðir til að neyða okkur í átt að jafnrétti. Með fæðingarorlofið þegar það var opið, þá tóku konurnar fæðingarorlofið. Það þarf að þvinga karla til að taka fæðingarorlof til þess að vera kominn í jafnrétti. Það þurfti lög til þess um stjórnir fyrirtækja. Það þarf lög um jafnlaunavottun, það þarf bara fullt af þvingandi aðgerðum til að ná þessu”

<sup>72</sup> Original quote: “Lögfesting er vegna þess að það gekk ekki öðruvísi. Ef það kemst frá því að lögfesta það og ná þessum árangri, þá væri það bara betra. Gæði þjóðfélags mælist ekki í fjölda lagasetninga, það væri betra að þurfa ekki lögfesta það, en ef það þarf að lögfesta þá skal bara hafa það. Maðurinn er náttúrulega bara gölluð skepna”

<sup>73</sup> Original quote: “Ég held að allir bera einhverja ábyrgð, en ábyrgð stjórnvalda er mikil og stjórnenda er mjög mikil. Síðan auðvitað þurfa allir hinir að vera með”

C: *Yeah you know, just the criminal justice system in general*” (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>74</sup>  
femocrat creator.

In the latter example, the femocrat creator argues that the criminal framework and justice system should be re-thought and adjusted to measure up to each crime such as sexual assault, rape, and other gender-based violence. Coordinating the field of gender equality is in this sense also part of the government’s responsibility according to the creators:

*“The support system for gender equality can be assigned to be the responsibility of the government. There should be some improvements on that in our society”* (resp. 19.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>75</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“C: We are all responsible. But of course, the given function of the government is to be responsible for taking care of the issue...like when we are waiting for the new government’s policies we are like: what is it [the focus]? This matters, because we need to be able to say: ‘Ok we are doing our job, and we are trying our hardest to live up to the policies’ If it is not in the policy in any way, what are we then to do? Or you understand, it matters. I: That the government set an example as a role model?*

*C: Yes, they certainly need to be that. Role model in words and deeds. And the labour market as well, and other leaders, and the labour unions and all these places. Influencers, they also share this responsibility. And civilians, they need to share their responsibility as individuals, because this is something we all need to work towards collectively, in all spheres”* (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>76</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“I think that the government needs to safeguard and encourage equality...just like (slams hands in the table). From there we, of course, need to encourage civil society. So yes, I think that the authorities should inspire others to engage in equality ... to increase and equalize the possibilities of the Icelandic inhabitants.*

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<sup>74</sup> Original quote: “C: Þannig að einhverju leiti finnst mér stjórnvöld vera á undan og svona sýna ákveðna forystu og leiðtoga svona hæfileika sko.

I: Svona ábyrgðarstöðu?

C: Já, en að einhverju leyti eins og bara varðandi ég meina það þarf bara að fara í gegnum málaflokk hérna kynferðisafbrotu og bara taka hann bara í nefið, og klippa bara þetta drasl sem er til í ræmur helst og byrja bara upp á nýtt.

I: Afbrota lögin?

C: Já þú veist, bara refsí og bæði náttúrulega bara refsiramminn”

<sup>75</sup> Original quote: “Stuðningskerfi með jafnréttismálum og það má eiginlega segja að það sé á ábyrgð stjórnvalda. Það væri hægt að gera betur í okkar samfélagi”

<sup>76</sup> Original quote: “C: Við berum öll ábyrgð. En auðvitað bera stjórnvöld eðli máls samkvæmt verulega mikla ábyrgð og þau þurfa að axla þessa ábyrgð og þau þurfa einhvernvegin að halda utan um þetta sko, af því það er svoltið það sem að er ... sko við vorum að bíða eftir stjórnarsáttmálanum og þá vorum við alveg: hvað er það? Af því að það skiptir svo miklu máli. Það skiptir svo miklu máli að við getum sagt: ók við erum í okkar störfum, við erum er að reyna okkar allra besta að reyna að passa upp á þetta. En ef þetta er ekki í stjórnarsáttmálanum á neinn hátt, hvað erum við þá að gera? Eða þú skilur, þetta skiptir máli.

I: Að stjórnvöld þurfa að vera fyrirmynd?

C: Já þau þurfa að vera það. Fyrirmynd bæði í orði og svo bara á borði. Og svo atvinnulífið líka. Og að allir leiðtogar og stéttarfélagin og öllum þessum stöðum. Áhrifafólk, það þarf að bera ábyrgð. Og aðrir óbreyttir borgarar, þeir þurfa að bera að bera ábyrgð sem einstaklingar. Af því þetta er eitthvað sem við þurfum öll að vinna að, þetta er á öllum stöðum”

*I: And the best way to do that is through legislative measures?*

*C: Yes, with actions of course, but you need to do both...the law does not mean anything if you do not have any measures or actions that follow” (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>77</sup> femocrat creator.*

Actions are described by the femocrat creators above, as an important companion to the legislation. This might explain why the Icelandic government has a concrete action plan as recalled in the previous chapter. Within the democratic system, the creators all point to the collective will of the people to implement changes. No changes can be made without the support of society, as the examples show:

*“The politicians do not make any decisions unless the society demands they do so. Usually, politics does not rule out the acceptable attitudes” (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>78</sup> femocrat creator.*

*“It all comes down to the will of the people, they do what the nation wants. One cannot deny that it does not hurt that the issues are as popular as it is today. There will of course always be people who try to hold it back, some male chauvinists who do not want to ride along. But there is a general agreement on this [gender equality] in society. So I think it just all relies on that, it is what the nation wants” (resp. 17.01.2018, Iceland)<sup>79</sup> social creator.*

*“The vast majority agrees, at least in words, that people want equality. But it is still a cultural thing that just takes longer to change. It does not change with a single pencil strike” (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>80</sup> femocrat creator.*

The responsibility of securing gender equality is according to the creators a job for society as a whole, but most importantly the government should lead the way. One of the femocrat creators mentions all the possible actors that should be involved such as the police, the educational system, and awareness centers, and lastly that men should participate on a broader scale:

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<sup>77</sup> Original quote: “C: Mér finnst stjórnvöld þurfa að vera á verði og vilja stuðla að jafnrétti... bara (setur hendur saman og slær niður). Þaðan verðum við að stuðla og svo auðvitað félagasamtök. En já, mér finnst að stjórnvöld eigi að hvetja til jafnréttis og auðvitað... og til þess að auka tækifæri og jafna tækifæri allra landsmanna.

I: Já. Og er best að gera það með lögum?

C: Jah, aðgerðir náttúrulega, en það þarf náttúrulega bæði... sko lög gera ekkert nema að það séu aðgerðir eða gert með aðgerðum”

<sup>78</sup> Original quote: “Pólitíkin tekur ekki neinar ákvarðanir um neitt nema að samfélagið fari fram á það. Yfirleitt ræðst pólitíkin ekki ofan á viðtekin viðhorf”

<sup>79</sup> Original quote: ‘Það er náttúrulega bara þjóðarvilji, hvað vill þjóðin. Það er bara fyrst og fremst það og svo skemmir ekki fyrir því að í dag er þetta vinsælt. Jú það eru auðvitað einhverjir afturhaldseggir, karlrembur og eitthvað sem vilja þetta ekki. En þorri þjóðarinnar er alveg sammála. Þannig að ég held að það sé bara þannig að þjóðin vilji þetta’

<sup>80</sup> Original quote: “Við erum sammála um langflest, allavega í orði, að fólk vilji jafnrétti og allt þetta. En það er einhvernvegin enn þá þetta menningarlega sem að tekur bara lengri tíma að breyta. Það breytist ekki með einu pennastriki sko”

*“The government should be a role model. They need to show an example and have the highest responsibility for implementing equality as the norm. They need to have everything in order within their own system, so it can later be projected on society. It is a huge responsibility to make equality a norm in society”* (resp. 13.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>81</sup> social creator.

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*“The responsibility is in the hands of many people. There is no one person that can be held responsible for this. The responsibility is distributed amongst many, at least today. I think that the authorities, I mean the ministry needs to lead the way and set the right example. The ministries need to have everything sorted before they can implement any regulation on others. But if that were the case, that the government had to have everything sorted within their own institutions before regulating outwards nothing would happen. That is how it works in practice at least. We are here also talking about the Supreme Court, the Police, The Centre for Gender Equality...it is on all of their shoulders, as it is on ours. I think if one of these pillars breaks, then I would be very afraid of everything coming tumbling down. Every step towards gender equality is a good step”* (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>82</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“I: Who should take responsibility for gender equality?”*

*C: It’s a government of course, but then it’s clear to everyone too that we should all be responsible. It may be said that the government sets the tone but then it’s all our task”* (resp. 20.12.2107, Iceland)<sup>83</sup> academic creator.

What is evident in the recent excerpts is that there is an understanding among the creators that the government plays a large role in securing gender equality. At the same time, the creators went beyond the role of the government and stated that it is ‘everyone’s task to secure and advance gender equality in society’. The government’s task is to set an example for the rest and not shy away from special measures. What some of the creators also frequently mentioned is the role of the grassroots and feminist movements in relation to the government’s responsibilities. Which is elaborated upon after the discussion on the role of the Dutch government according to the Dutch creators.

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<sup>81</sup> Original quote: “Stjórnvöld eiga að vera fyrirmynd. Þau þurfa að sýna fordæmi og bera mikla ábyrgð á að jafnrétti verði sjálfsgætt hlutur. Þau þurfa að hafa jafnrétti innan síns kerfi til að það sé hægt að miðla því áfram í samfélagið. Það liggur í því gríðarleg ábyrgð að gera jafnrétti að sjálfsgættum hlut í samfélaginu”

<sup>82</sup> Original quote: “já, ábyrgð..... mér finnst þetta vera í mörgum höndum. Það er enginn einn sem ber ábyrgð á þessu. Ábyrgðin er víða og dreifð eins og hún er í dag. Mér finnst að ríkisvaldið og ég meina stjórnarráðið þarf náttúrulega að leiða með góðu fordæmi. Stjórnvöld þurfa að leiða með góðu fordæmi, hafa hlutina í lagi hjá sér áður en þau fara segja öðrum með lögum og reglugerðum hvernig þau eiga að gera hlutina sko. Sannarlega þurfa stjórnvöld að leiða með góðu fordæmi en ef það mætti ekki setja lög og reglur áður en allt er tipp topp hjá stjórnvöldum þá myndi aldrei neitt gerast. Þannig virkar þetta held ég bara í raunveruleikanum. Við erum að tala um hæstarétt, við erum að tala um lögregluna, við erum að tala um jafnréttisstofu, við erum erum að tala um..... sem fræðslusetur. Já og, svo finnst mér þetta vera einstaklings, samfélags- skóla og mennta hérna, já...mér finnst það eiginlega vera á herðum okkar allra sko. Mér finnst þetta vera eitt af þeim. Ef að einhver stóðin klikkar, það er eins og ég var að segja áðan sko, þá fyndist mér, þá er ég hrædd um að molni undan sko. Öll skref í jafnréttisátt eru góð skref”

<sup>83</sup> Original quote: “I: Hver á að taka ábyrgð á jafnréttismálum?”

C: Já það eru sko auðvitað stjórnvöld, en síðan er það auðvitað við öll líka. Það má segja stjórnvöld leggja svoltið línurnar en síðan er það líka okkar allra”

## The Netherlands

The Dutch creators had similar answers for the government's role, namely to regulate and govern but with a slightly different angle of influence. This means the way the government distances itself from regulating more strictly, due to their current liberal framework. One of the femocrat creators stated that the government is often more fixed on their role of setting an example than on implementing the policies to the masses:

*“So that is what we as a government can do well, the tax arrangements and childcare which is the core business of the government, of course. The government can also engage by creating awareness of cultural change but that cannot really be regulated by law ... But they often tend to focus too much on [themselves] instead of what the role of the government is towards the civilians. Often they flee a little towards yes we have a lot of women at the top’ ‘We have a female SG’ or something like that ‘oh oh oh we are so progressive’. But the policies are not gender mainstreamed at all” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>84</sup> femocrat creator.*

This femocrat creator describes the government's focus on their own employees as a more selfish act. The creator quickly came to the realization that if the government is to serve as an example for society, they also need to make sure gender equality is advanced within the walls of the ministry so it can be replicated outside of those walls. With this in mind, the same femocrat creator altered the vision of the role of the government to some extent in the next example:

*“C: We did that [campaign] once because it is again about us, then it is more a quest of: is this now the task of the national government? Or is that more the job of others? So now we have more than press regulation that we co-finance the municipalities if they do that sort of thing themselves.  
I: And the strategic partnerships?  
C: Yes, they are also for such events. They also deal with that yes. But it is nevertheless the question of well here comes the government to impose on women what they have to do. That is something that has to be done locally” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>85</sup> femocrat creator.*

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<sup>84</sup> Original quote: “Dus dat is wat wij als overheid goed kunnen doen, dus de fiscale regelingen en kinderopvang en dat is core business van de overheid natuurlijk. Bewustwording verandering, cultuurverandering kan de overheid ook wel een beetje mee bemoeien maar is niet echt bij wet te regelen...Maar ze hebben juist vaak de neiging om te veel op [zichzelf] te focussen ipv wat doen wij in onze rol als overheid voor de burgers. Vaak vluchten ze daar een beetje in van: ja we hebben heel veel vrouwen aan de top. We hebben een vrouwelijke SG ofzo 'oh oh oh wat zijn we goed'. Maar het beleid is nog steeds helemaal niet genderbewust”

<sup>85</sup> Original quote: “C: Dat [campagne] hebben we toen eenmalig gedaan omdat het toch wel weer voor ons, dan is het toch meer een zoektocht van: is dit nu weer de taak van de Rijksoverheid? Of is dat meer de taak van anderen? Dus nu hebben we meer die pers regeling dat we gemeente cofinanciering geven als ze zelf dat soort dingen doen.  
I: En de strategische partnerschappen?  
C: Ja die zijn er ook voor. Die houden zich daar ook mee bezig ja. Maar het is toch wel de vraag van: ja daar komt de rijksoverheid aan en die gaan dan van alles opleggen wat de vrouwen moeten gaan doen. Dat is iets wat lokaal moet gebeuren”

Right away a certain distance and decentralization can be depicted from the creator's insights. Nationally, the role of the government is to finance organizations such as the women's organization, with strategic partnerships. Half of the creators saw this as one of the main roles of the government. As a civil servant, one of the creators explained how they influence gender equality issues apart from their emancipation policy:

*“We as a government spend a lot of money on campaigns for everything. For example, how do we present gender roles there? And based on that analysis, together with communication advisers within the government, I would like to look at: what are the good examples? Where did things go well and what are we doing less well?”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>86</sup> femocrat creator.

The campaigns this creator speaks of are usually launched by the women's/social organizations. Now the women's organisations work in strategic partnerships financed by the government:

*“We have been working since the beginning of this year with what we call strategic partnerships. In the past, we worked with grants. So, organizations could apply for a grant at our institution. Grants are one of our policy instruments to achieve the goals. We could then award or reject the grant. And then you have very few opportunities to steer. Because in the end you examine what has happened and then you assess whether the grant was well spent. But you cannot intervene during the process, because that is legally determined, like: ‘I want you to do this and do that’. That is only to be determined by the grant recipient. We found it annoying that we could not steer much during the grant period. It also creates a relationship between the financial provider and the recipient, while you often want to work together. That is why we have chosen to encourage applications from alliances”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>87</sup> femocrat creator.

This excerpt shows a shift in the role of the government towards more control, which juxtaposes the before mentioned liberal rhetoric. What became clearer as the conversation continued is that the government also monitors their own projects through financing the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (nl. Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau) and the women's organisations (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands). What can be drawn from the excerpts is how the creators see the role of the government as facilitators rather than direct influencers. In a way, the government seems to be an invisible influencer

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<sup>86</sup> Original quote: “Wij als rijksoverheid besteden heel veel geld aan campagnes voor van alles. Hoe laten we daar gender rollen bijvoorbeeld zien. En op basis van die analyse zou ik heel graag dus willen kijken met allemaal communicatie adviseurs, binnen de rijksoverheid: wat zijn nou de goede voorbeelden? Waar ging het nou heel goed en waar doen we het nou minder goed?”

<sup>87</sup> Original quote: “We werken sinds begin dit jaar met strategische partnerschappen noemen we het. In het verleden werkten het zo dat we met subsidies werkten. Dus organisaties kunnen een subsidie aanvragen bij ons als directie. Subsidies is een van onze beleidsinstrumenten om de doelen te bereiken. Dan konden wij de subsidie toekennen of afwijzen. En vervolgens heb je heel weinig mogelijkheden om te sturen. Want uiteindelijk kijk je wat er is gebeurt en dan beoordeel je of de subsidie goed is besteed maar je kan niet ondertussen zeggen, want dat is juridisch bepaald, dat: ik wil dat je dit doet en dat doet. Dat is aan de subsidie ontvanger te bepalen. Dat vonden wij vervelend dat we niet tijdens de subsidieperiode weinig konden sturen. En het verzorgt ook voor een verhouding dat jij de subsidieverstrekker bent en je hebt de subsidie ontvanger, terwijl je vaak samen wil werken. Daarom hebben we er voor gekozen om aanvragen te stimuleren vanuit allianties”

due to their financial attributes while at the same time wanting to perform their objective and distant role. This makes a combination of highly neoliberal market logic with a very pervasive omnipotent control logic:

*I: Do you think that the government is responsible for gender equality?*

*C: Morally responsible?*

*I: Yes.*

*C: Ehm, legally yes. Because we have entered all sorts of legal obligations, and we have legislation that guarantees equality for everyone. And equal treatment must guarantee that discrimination is prevented. That is what I think, and that is a political vision and a moral vision, shared by our minister who also thinks that you have to guarantee a certain basis of equal opportunities for everyone which are currently not present.*

*I: I have the idea, or that is my experience that the Dutch civilians want to distance themselves from the government a bit. That feeling that they do not want the government to stick their fingers everywhere.*

*C: Yes. That's true. With this cabinet, the emphasis is on personal responsibility and freedom of choice. Yes" (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>88</sup> femocrat creator.*

What the Dutch creators agree on is that the government should intervene financially, facilitating social change. According to the Dutch creators, the government should focus more on (inter)national policy rather than internal policies. For both the Icelandic and Dutch creators, the government should serve as an example. Their role as government did, however, differ slightly in Iceland and the Netherlands. The Icelandic creators describe the Icelandic government as being a particle in the establishment of advancing gender equality with legal measures. According to the Dutch creators, the role of the government leans towards the liberal specter, distanced from the special measures. As for the collaboration with the women's movement, all the creators see the importance of a coalition.

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<sup>88</sup> Original quote: "I: Heb je het idee dat de overheid verantwoordelijk is voor gendergelijkheid?

C: Moreel verantwoordelijk?

I: Ja.

C: Ehm, teen eerste juridisch ja. Want wij zijn allerlei juridische verplichtingen aangegaan en we hebben allemaal wetten die op mate van gelijkheid moet garanderen voor iedereen. En gelijke behandeling moet het voorkomen van discriminatie garanderen. Ik vind, en dat is een politiek visie een morele visie en dat vind deze minister ook dat je een bepaalde basis van gelijke kansen voor iedereen moet garanderen en die zijn er op dit moment niet.

I: Ik heb het idee, of dat is mijn beleving dat Nederlandse burger de overheid een beetje los wil laten. Dus dat de overheid niet overal hun vingers in moeten steken.

C: Ja. Dat is zo. Met dit kabinet is dat zo dat veel eigen verantwoordelijkheid en keuzevrijheid. Ja"



## ***Women's movements***

According to Woodward (2003), the women's movements are the watchdogs for the government to assure their accountability. The Dutch creators argue that there is a lack of collectivity among women in Dutch society. The reason for this may be that the younger generation has been taught to focus on individual development and invent their own realities rather than strive for the collective as argued by McRobbie:

Young women are, as a result [of modernization], now "dis-embedded" from communities where gender roles were fixed. And, as the old structures of social class fade away, and lose their grip in the context of "late or second modernity," individuals are increasingly called upon to invent their own structures. They must do this internally and individualistically, so that self-monitoring practices (the diary, the life plan, the career pathway) replace reliance on set ways and structured pathways (2009: 260).

Here McRobbie (2009) speaks of individual endorsement and self-regulation. In some way, this opposes the women's movement as it is known, as a solidarity with a collective effort with the government institutions towards gender equality (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007). This subsection gives the creators perspective on how they see the role of the women's movement, starting with Iceland.

## **Iceland**

The women's movement in Iceland is described to be one of the driving forces behind gender equality policies:

*"I think the driving force is really just pressure from the women's movement. So, it's actually creating this driving force ... And this is the task for everyone. Because this does not happen by itself. Just like other equality struggles have shown whether it is a struggle for women or queer people, it is so important that there is a conversation between the grassroots and government. That also does not mean shoving equality down people's throats. There must also be an awareness that this is something that matters"* (Resp. 20.12.2107, Iceland)<sup>89</sup> academic creator.

*"The ones in power do not want to focus on gender equality, they focus on gender equality because they cannot ignore it any longer due to the amounts of pressure. In fact, the parties do not change their minds because they are good parties, they change their minds because they know they will increase their votes because of it. They know there is social pressure on the government to change, one just sees it. The government is changing and financing the issues that have received this pressure from the public, and of course, the massive movement of women is so eloquent, and it is so important for us to move on to the next steps*

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<sup>89</sup> Original quote: "Ég held að drifkrafturinn sé í raun kannski bara þrýstingur frá gegnum kvennabaráttu. Þannig að það er í raun, að skapa þennan drifkraft... Og þetta er verkefni allra. Því þetta gerist ekki, þú veist bara eins og öll svona jafnréttisbaráttu hefur sýnt sig hvort sem það er baráttu kvenna eða hinsegin fólks að hérna að það er svo mikilvægt líka að það eigi sér stað svona eitthvað samtal milli grasrótar og stjórnvalda. Það þýðir heldur ekki sko að ætla troða einhvernveginn jafnréttinu ofan í kokið á fólki. Það þarf líka að vera þessi hugmynd um að þetta sé eitthvað sem skiptir máli."

*of the equality struggle, which is currently happening. Knock on wood”* (resp. 21.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>90</sup> social creator.

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*“If we look at this from an equality perspective, everyone has equal rights and are equally liable for it. Of course, the government should play a role with policies and legislation, and so on and safeguard. The civic organizations have to push. The government should pull this up and the civil society should push. The labour community and the labour market as a whole, not just the business community but also employee movements and unions, and so on, they must find it within themselves and cultivate and enforce this. It is very important. And then all the way into the education system and universities. You know, it’s just a whole flora of people who come into play and everyone has their responsibilities”* (resp. 18.12.2017a, Iceland)<sup>91</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“I am a great enthusiast when it comes to their involvement in societal affairs. And that they stand their ground, and that is then to be **watchdogs**, pointing out things that we are failing at and come with suggestions and lobby them”* (resp. 18.12.2017a, Iceland)<sup>92</sup> femocrat creator.

As the excerpts show, the creators express that there is great amounts of pressure towards the government from the women’s movements, as they are the watchdogs for gender equality. These movements are described to be very active in organizing demonstrations and online campaigning and knowing the rules and challenging them accordingly:

*“I: Would you say that solidarity is an important foundation for gender equality? Now that women have been coming together and protesting, participating in the SlutWalk and such?  
C: Yes, yes, I think so ... I think it’s important. Absolutely. Yes yes, quite plainly. And for some parts claim power without asking for it. See? It is just like playing a game, knowing the rules and play it better”* (resp. 22.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>93</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>90</sup> Original quote: “Valdið vill ekki einblína á jafnréttismál, valdið einblínir á jafnréttismál vegna þess að þú getur ekki annað lengur, það er kominn svo mikill þrýstingur. Í rauninni flokkar breyta ekkert um skoðun því að þeir eru góðir flokkar, þeir breyta um skoðun vegna þess að þeir vita að þeir frá kjósendur út á það. Þeir vita að það er samfélagslegur þrýstingur á stjórnvöld að breyta, maður sér það bara. Stjórnvöld breyta og veita peninga í mál eftir þrýstingi almennings og þetta er auðvitað fjöldahreyfing kvenna er svo valdeflandi og er svo mikilvæg fyrir sem sagt að fleyta okkur áfram á næsta skref í jafnréttisbaráttunni, sem er mögulega að gerast núna. Knock on wood”

<sup>91</sup> Original quote: “Ef við horfum á þetta út frá jafnréttis sjónarmiðum, þá eiga allir jafnan rétt og jafna ábyrgð að bera í þessu. Auðvitað eiga stjórnvöld að sinna hlutverki og þarna, með stefnumótun og lagasetningu og svo framvegis og standa vörð. Borgarasamtök finnst mér eiga að ýta. Stjórnvöld eiga að vera toga þetta upp og borgarasamtökin að ýta þessu. Atvinnulífið og vinnumarkaðurinn í heildsinni, ekki bara atvinnulífið heldur líka starfsmannhreyfingar og stéttarfélag og svoleiðis þau verða að finna þetta inni hjá sér líka og rækta þetta og framfylgja þessu. Það er mjög mikilvægt. Og svo alveg inn í menntakerfið og háskólana. Þú veist það er bara heil flóra sem koma að þessu og kannski hver með sína ábyrgð sko”

<sup>92</sup> Original quote: “Ég er mikill áhugamaður um aðkomu þeirra að samfélagsmálum. Og að þau standi sig í stykkinu, og þarna er það þá að vera varðhundur, benda á það sem við erum að klicka á og koma með hugmyndir og ýta á þær”

<sup>93</sup> Original quote: “I: Myndir þú segja að samstaða væri mikilvæg í undirstöðu jafnréttismála? Nú hafa konur verið að koma saman og mótmæla og fara í druslugöngur og svona.

C: Já, já ég held það...ég held að það sé mikilvægt. Algjörlega. Já já, alveg klárlega. Og svolítið að taka völdin en ekki biðja um þau. Skilurðu? Að vera bara svolítið spila svolítið, kunna leikreglurnar og spila betur svolítið”

Next to knowing and challenging the rules, there is a certain collectivity described by the creators, amongst women in Iceland:

*“Yes, unity, yes because it is often said that women do not show solidarity. I really think that makes a fundamental difference, and it is often feared that when women or feminists or women’s movements [show solidarity] ... we do not have to agree. We can be on all parts on the spectrum: right, left, and disagree with the ways to achieve equality. But we can support each other in the fight and we have done that”* (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>94</sup> femocrat creator.

Not only is there a feeling of collectivity among Icelandic women, but also a solidarity with the international movement. One of the social creators explains that many ideas and claims the Icelandic women have are expanded on ideas from abroad such as the recent #Metoo movement:

*“The ideas are coming from abroad. When they arrive, something staggering becomes of them in Iceland. For example, one sees it with the #metoo movement and #freethenipple, these are ideas that start abroad but when we pick it up we expand on it. With the wave [metaphor] you emphasize that it’s a global struggle for women”* (resp. 21.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>95</sup> social creator.

In the quote above, the influences from the international community are said to have influenced the Icelandic demands in the form of a wave from the outside. The wave is also a reference to the first, second, third (and for some, fourth) feminist movements which have traveled across the ocean from abroad onto the beaches of the island. When the social creator was asked how the wave can be maintained, the answer was through the women’s movements. Next, to that, the most frequent answer to the role of the women’s movement is communicating society’s needs for improvement and to serve as a watchdog. So, in a way, like the social creator argued, the Icelandic movements and demands match the global appeals. According to the creators, the women’s movement have worked hard in the past years, which shows in the current social services in Iceland. One of the key elements is access to social services, which is according to several creators all thanks to the women’s movement:

*“C: I think we’re doing something right. We emphasize equal access to education and to be able to do so in the labour market. The employment rate of Icelandic women is at its*

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<sup>94</sup> Original quote: “Jú samstaða, já af því oft er verið að tala um að konur sýni ekki samstöðu. Mér finnst alveg grundvallarmunur á því og það er oft hræðsla við það að þegar konur eða semsagt konur, eða feministar eða kvannahreyfingar [sýna samstöðu]... við þurfum ekkert að vera sammála. Við getum verið alstaðar á spektruminu: hægri, vinstri og ósammála um allskonar leiðir að jafnrétti. En við getum stutt hvor aðra í baráttunni og við höfum gert það”

<sup>95</sup> Original quote: “Hugmyndirnar eru að koma erlendis frá og koma hingað og svo verður eitthvað rosalega úr henni hérna á Íslandi. Maður sér það einmitt til dæmis með #metoo byltinguna og #freethenipple að þetta eru hugmyndir sem að byrja erlendis en við tökum þetta upp gerum eitthvað meira. Það með bylgjuna þá leggur þú áhersluna á að það sé alheimsbarátta kvenna”

highest. To maintain that position, you need to pre-schools, for example. So, we have completely thought about these foundational aspects ... and then you need to have an Icelandic Student Loan, with all its advantages and disadvantages. It's not the best service in the world but just providing everyone with the opportunity to study is important. It is equally taken into account whether you have a child to support that is of equal importance, unlike in many other countries. So, I think we have laid out the foundational grounds [for success] that are relevant.

I: Who built these foundations, where these the demands of the women's movements?

C: When I look back in time then the Icelandic women's movement has fought for many things I mentioned earlier. Preschools are undoubtedly their doing" (resp. 19.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>96</sup> femocrat creator.

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"C: In the year of '96 the Iceland party ruled the city after winning its grand and remarkable historical victory two years earlier, or '94. This was due to issues relating to equality in a broader sense. Such as pre-schools, and continuing school days for children. These were actually the demands traced back to what we called 'the foundational claims of the Redstocking movement'. These were 8 or 10 key elements which could just be checked. These were the elements that won them the election. And the ones that held the majority for 60 years, with one exception in one term, fell on these issues. Pre-school issues, such as meals at school and a continuing school day, were very important, and of course, the situation and status of young parents, children became apparent.

I: So, it was around this time that equality issues were established in politics?

C: It became more in the forefront, yes, and then we got a feminist mayor with feminist emphases" (resp. 29.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>97</sup> femocrat creator.

These examples exhibit the movements' demands and how they translated to the political arena. It is the collaboration with the other fields such as academia and the government that are of value here.

As the examples in this section show, the creators proudly speak of the role of the women's movement and the collective solidarity towards gender equality. Being proud of the collective achievement of the women's movement shows that people have not distanced themselves from the

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<sup>96</sup> Original quote: "C: Ég held að við séum alveg að gera eitthvað rétt. Við erum að leggja áherslu á jafnan aðgang að menntun og til þess að geta gert það á vinnumarkaði. Atvinnuþáttaka íslenskra kvenna er með því hæsta sem þekkest. Til þess að geta gert það þarftu að vera með leikskóla t.d. Þannig að við höfum alveg hugsað um þessar undirstöður...og svo þarftu að vera með Lánsjóð íslenskra námsmanna, með öllum hans kostum og göllum. Það er ekki besta þjónustustofnun í heimi en bara það að eiga þó að allir eigi þennan möguleika að fara í nám skiptir máli. Það er líka tekið tillit til þess hvort að þú ert með barn á framfærslu sem skiptir líka máli sem er ekki í mörgum öðrum löndum. Þannig að ég held að við höfum byggt svona ákveðnar undirstöður sem skipta máli.

I: Hver byggði þessar undirstöður, var þetta kvennafélögin?

C: Þegar ég horfi til baka þá hefur íslensk kvennahreyfing barist fyrir mjög mörgu sem er þarna. Leikskólunum tvímælalaust þeirra verk"

<sup>97</sup> Original quote: "C: Í ársburði 96 að Reykjavíkur listinn sem þá réð borginni og hafði unnið sinn stóra og merkilega sögulega sigur 2 árum fyrr, eða 94. Mikið til út á mál sem að svona heyrðu til jafnréttismála í breiðum skilningi. Það voru leikskólamáli, það var samfelldur skóladagur. Það var í raun hægt að fara í gamla það sem við kölluðum alltaf 'kröfugrunn rauðsokka hreyfingarinnar'. Þar sem voru 8 eða 10 lykilkjörfur, og bara haka við. Þetta voru allt orðin kosningarmál. Og á þessum málum unnust kosningar, og meirihluti sem hafði verið í borginni í 60 ár eins flokks meirihluti í 60 ár með 1 undantekningu á einu kjörtímabili, féll á þessum málum. Leikskólamálin og eins og samfelldur máltíð í skóla og samfelldur skóladagur skiptu þar rosalega miklu máli og auðvitað snerist það um aðbúnað ungra foreldra, barna og annars slíkt.

I: Þannig að um þetta leiti orðu jafnréttismál brautryðjandi í stjórn máli?

C: Framarlega já, og síðan fáum við feminista sem borgarstjóra og feminískar áherslur"

feminist movements as argued by McRobbie (2009). This pride translates into more active demands and solidarity among people in society and the triangular network. The movements are an accountability mechanism, a crucial element in sustaining gender equality policies according to Hannan (2013). The sustainability of gender equality policies, as argued by Outshoorn and Kantola (2007), relies on the realisation of the feminist demands on a legal level. What the examples of Iceland also show is that the feminist demands are met on a governmental level. The demands are realized to such an extent that it has changed the ‘basis’ for an equal existence in Icelandic society according to the creators. A ‘basis’ which the Dutch creators describe to be on another level.

## **The Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, there is a slightly different trend in the women’s movements. The movements have become fairly invisible, to the extent that it seems like they are no longer active. The movements are however still active, but function on an institutional level as organisations. These organisations do not take to the streets because it is hard to mobilize the Dutch citizens to take such radical actions according to a femocrat creator:

*“You see that it is very special that civil society, that is, the opposition from the government, is very institutionalized. We finance organizations to write a critical report for the UN about us [CEDAW]. So, I write the report and I provide a grant to an organization to write a critical report about us. And that is very much appreciated. And that is very powerful I think that you organize that counter-movement. Because that makes the policy better. It also ensures that the organizations start working in partnership. Civil society is very professionalized. There are a lot of people who just get a salary and can do their job very well. It also ensures that it [i.e. critique] is also slightly less radical, because of you, you are always in conversation as partners”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>98</sup> femocrat creator.

What can be drawn from this femocrat creator’s example is that the women’s organizations work with governmental grants. Through this financial support, the organisations are able to advice on gender equality policies. That role was also stressed by the creators as one of the women’s organisations’ primary roles in relation to the government. The femocrat creator sees this as an improvement to their policies because they serve as a reflection to their work. The fact that people can now make a career out of this position makes them less radical. This is because it now resembles an ‘office job’ which makes it lose its radical features of raiding the streets for example. The campaigns and projects are launched

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<sup>98</sup> Original quote: “Je ziet dat het is heel bijzonder dat het maatschappelijk middenveld, dus het tegengeluid van de overheid is heel geïnstitutionaliseerd. Wij financieren organisaties om een kritische rapportage te schrijven voor de VN over ons [CEDAW]. Dus ik schrijf de rapportage en ik verstrek subsidie aan een organisatie om een kritische rapportage over ons te schrijven. En dat wordt heel erg gewaardeerd. En dat is heel krachtig denk ik dat je dat je dat tegengeluid organiseert. Want daardoor wordt het beleid ook beter. Het zorgt er ook voor dat ze ook in partnerschap werken. Het maatschappelijke middenveld heel erg geprofessionaliseerd. Er zitten allemaal mensen die gewoon een salaris krijgen en heel goed hun werk kunnen doen. Het zorgt er ook voor dat het [kritiek] ook iets minder radicaal is, omdat je, je bent altijd gesprek partners”

by these organizations often as an assignment from the government, which may indeed also make them less radical:

*“And we also campaign on the theme representation. And then we focus more on media makers. For that, we get a grant from the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science so there is a realization that it is important, but it is all very small. We are now doing a project on representation, or we are working on it. But it is not stimulated to the point that we demand a more strict advertising code committee who are stricter against stereotyping in advertising or something. We can do much more with those little steps”* (resp. 01.03.2018a, The Netherlands)<sup>99</sup> social creator.

*“In the Netherlands there are very few of such movements, it is always linked to organizations. You have Greenpeace that organizes something, or ehm WO = MEN organizes a Women’s March or a festival. There is a lot of energy in the field, but it only comes together in an institutionalized way. And that we’re there ... that also makes us less radical, or that makes the movement less radical”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>100</sup> femocrat creator.

The creators here demonstrate the interaction between the women’s organisation and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in how they use their governmental funding. What is interesting in this excerpt is that the social creator describes their project as a small step, indicating that it is not a big project. At the same time a femocrat creator claims that the organizations are almost fully funded on government grants, and calls it a collaboration and not project base funding indicating a close connection to the civil organizations:

*“Yes, that [i.e. cooperation with civil society] is certainly present. Of course they are financed by us for 90% or something. It varies a bit per organization, but they are financed for a great deal by us. So that is a nice piece of cooperation, that you are able to do your work as an NGO”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>101</sup> femocrat creator.

*“Yes. And on the other hand, they do fund it [the shadow report]. So that’s nice. But that is also so nice about Dutch policy or the Dutch government. We receive money from the*

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<sup>99</sup> Original quote: “En wij voeren ook campagne op thema beeldvorming. En dan richten we ons meer op mediamakers. En daar krijgen we ook subsidie van ministerie OCW dus daar in is er wel realisatie dat het belangrijk is maar het is allemaal heel klein zeg maar. We doen nu wel een project op beeldvorming, we zijn er mee bezig. Maar het is niet zo gestimuleerd dat er een reclamecodecommissie strenger optreed tegen stereotypering in reclames ofzo. Er kan veel meer met die kleine stapjes”

<sup>100</sup> Original quote: “Wat opvalt is dat in Nederland heel weinig van dit soort bewegingen zijn, het is altijd gelieerd aan organisaties. Dus je hebt Greenpeace organiseert iets, of ehm WO=MEN organiseert een Women's March of een festival. Er is heel veel energie van mensen maar het komt alleen geïnstitutionaliseerd samen. En dat we daar... dat maakt ons ook minder radicaal, of dat maakt de beweging minder radicaal”

<sup>101</sup> Original quote: “Ja dat [samenwerking met maatschappelijk middenveld] is zeker aanwezig. Ze worden door ons betaald natuurlijk voor 90% of zo iets. Het verschilt een beetje per organisatie maar ze worden voor een heel groot deel door ons betaald. Dus dat is al een leuk stukje samenwerking, dat je daardoor in staat bent om je werk te doen als NGO”

*ministries and also from our members, but also from the departments. So that is, well ... the interesting thing about the Netherlands that they pay for their own accountability”* (resp. 28.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>102</sup> social creator.

The latter excerpt is a response of a social creator when asked about the funding the organization receives from the government. The social creator later articulated that the government is not always happy with their criticism, but they do finance their own criticism, which the creator finds amusing and great at the same time. There certainly is some sort of collaboration with the government as the financial provider and the movement/ organizations the receiver. This is something the femocrat creators hope to change with the new alliance partnerships. Whether that will also improve the collectivity among the fragmented organizations is yet to be determined. As for the general public, the creators believe it is difficult to mobilize people for several reasons. One of the reasons is because there is a general idea among the public that gender equality has already been achieved:

*“Yes, and that everything is settled already [emancipation] and that is why it is more difficult to convince people and organizations and others that we have a lot of work ahead of us. And that we also have to look critically at ourselves”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>103</sup> femocrat creator.

A social creator argues that the lack of mobilization has something to do with the cultural attitude:

*“C: At the same time there is also a bit that is called the ‘zesjescultuur’.  
I: I don’t know what that is.*

*C: That is like an attitude thing. It is like if you get a 6 out of 10 for something in class. And that goes along with the ‘je kop boven het maaiveld uitsteken’. ‘If you got a 6 you passed, it is good enough. What are you going for an 8, or a 9? What are you some kind of nerd? Do you want to show off? Do you think you are better?’ That is a very weird thing. And honestly, that is kind of at odds with one side of what I mentioned earlier, which is the colonial attitude of ‘we are better than everyone else’. So maybe we are better than everyone else, but in this country is supposed to be the same and not.... so having said all that it makes it a difficult nation to literally bring people out on the streets to demonstrate”* (resp. 26.03.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>104</sup> social creator.

As described by a social and femocrat creator, it is hard to create a sustainable movement because of the difficulty of mobilizing people and to the fact that they rely on governmental funding. The government

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<sup>102</sup> Original quote: “Ja. En aan de andere kant, ze financieren het [de schaduwrapportage] wel. Dus dat is ook wel mooi. Maar dat is ook wel zo mooi aan het Nederlandse beleid he, of van de Nederlandse overheid. Wij krijgen geld van de ministeries en ook van onze leden, maar ook van de ministeries. Dus dat is wel, nou ja .... het interessante van Nederland dat ze dus hun eigen accountability betalen”

<sup>103</sup> Original quote: “Ja en dat het wel geregeld hebben [emancipation] en daarom is het lastiger om mensen en organisaties en andere te overtuigen dat er nog best wel veel moet gebeuren. En dat we ook kritisch naar onszelf moeten kijken”

<sup>104</sup> Interview was conducted in English.

does, however, profit from this collaboration as part of its staff is influenced by the organizations according to a femocrat creator:

*“I: Are you influenced in any way by the movements in general at the ministry?  
C: Yes, I think that happens unconsciously. You live as a civil agent in society just like everybody else where we are subjected to the same influences”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>105</sup> femocrat creator.

To support the case, this femocrat creator gives a practical example of a direct collaboration with civil society:

*“I sit in the hall and negotiate with the other countries to achieve a result and make progress. And [someone from civil society] is outside the room and coordinates civil society and informs me with knowledge and also tries to lobby outside the room. And that is how we all have our own role here. And we need each other. I am the possible femocrat, but I can not do anything without civil society and vice versa”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>106</sup> femocrat creator.

Here the femocrat claims that the creators in the government and the creators in civil society need each other, which Outshoorn and Kantola (2007) claim makes successful women’s policy agencies. Furthermore, the Dutch seem to have a collaboration between the two corners of the triangle. The collaboration is very structured in the sense that it relies on financial arrangements. That was indeed described to be one of the reasons why the organizations are not as radical by the creators. Another factor is the fragmentation of the movements which denies the ability for more mobilization. The lack of mobilization is due to the Dutch cultural aspect and the general ideas of gender equality being achieved already. As for the role of the movement it has become clear that they serve as a link between the public and the government through financial collaboration and campaigning. It is however not enough to partake in collaboration, as stated by Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay (2015), certain expertise must be acknowledged and internalized for the progression of gender equality policies. In what follows, this key factor of gendered expertise and gender knowledge is explored in a comparative manner as the previous segments.

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<sup>105</sup> Original quote: “I: Worden jullie beïnvloed door de vrouwenbeweging als ministerie medewerkers?  
C: Ja. Ik denk dat dat ook onbewust gebeurt, je leeft als beleidsmedewerker ook gewoon in deze samenleving, we krijgen alles mee”

<sup>106</sup> Original quote: “Ik zit in de zaal en doe de onderhandelingen met de andere landen om tot een resultaat te komen en vooruitgang te boeken. En [iemand van maatschappelijk middenveld] zit buiten de zaal en coördineert het maatschappelijke middenveld en voed mij met kennis en probeert ook te lobbyen buiten de zaal. En zo hebben we als onze eigen rol hierin. En hebben we elkaar nodig. Ik ben dan de mogelijke femocraat, maar kan ik niks zonder het maatschappelijke middenveld en andersom ook niet”



### ***Academic field***

This section discusses the third corner of the feminist triangle. From Halsaa's (1991) strategic partnerships and Woodward's (2003) 'velvet triangle' the integration of academic expertise is mentioned as a key aspect in the success of gender equality policies. Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay (2015) agree that the femocrats must possess a certain gender awareness while pursuing gender equality. This implies the integration of the academic field of gender/women's studies through higher education. In this section, another level is introduced, namely the integration of feminism into lower educational levels. As per usual the creators were asked to reflect on certain issues, in this case, they discussed the integration of feminism and collaboration with academia.

### **Iceland**

Feminism and its agenda are present in the curriculum at upper secondary schools. Besides this, students are organizing feminist associations in large numbers and raising awareness on slut-shaming and other issues that affect their adolescent lives. This is all due to the schooling in gender equality from such an early stage and growing awareness campaigns on gender inequality.

*"The schools, catch them early and thread it into the community. The more people talk about it the better. It's good to discuss these issues. This was exactly discussed in my son's school who is in the 9th grade. They held a gender equality forum and discussed gender equality throughout the day. This was a very good initiative and it opened their minds"* (resp. 13.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>107</sup> social creator.

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*"Students have started feminist student associations in upper secondary schools. It all has its reasons, and we work towards this together. We go to the schools and speak to students"* (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>108</sup> femocrat creator.

This development is, according to the same femocrat creator, countered at the University of Iceland. Although there are active and organized feminist groups in the academic community, a recent survey shows that the majority of the graduate students are not as engaged in gender equality issues as anticipated:

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<sup>107</sup> Original quote: "Skólarnir, ná þeim snemma og þræða þetta í samfélagið. Því fleiri sem tala um þetta sem betra. Gott að ræða þessi mál. Þetta var einmitt rætt í skóla sonar míns sem er í 9a bekk. Þau héldu jafnréttisþing og ræddu jafnréttismál heilan kennsludag. Þetta var mjög gott framtak og opnaði hug þeirra"

<sup>108</sup> Original quote: "Það fóru að koma upp feminista félög í framhaldsskólum. Allt þetta átti sér ástæðu, það var unnið með þetta allt saman. Og farið í alla skóla og talað við nemendur og svona"

*“Students at the University of Iceland are not as aware of gender equality issues according to the outcomes of a recent study. They have not acquainted themselves with the information in the equality action plan on how to react to instances of sexual assault or violence”* (resp. 21.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>109</sup> femocrat creator.

The femocrat creator harmed this development and did not see this as a setback, but merely a new challenge. The attitude towards feminism and its integration in the school system was shared with other Icelandic creators in all the three fields. The majority of the creators addressed the need to make Gender Studies as a mandatory course at all levels:

*“There is one important thing I think needs to happen: we need to teach gender equality in the first levels of education in all schools. It’s a big deal to get this pushed through”* (resp. 15.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>110</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“Yes, I think so, like all education, just like education on equality in schools and playgrounds and all that. In fact, I think preschools are exceeding in this aspect. This school system is so stuck in traditions and practices that it can not really be changed”* (resp. 14.11.2017, Iceland)<sup>111</sup> social creator.

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*“I: But now upper secondary schools are starting with it [Gender Studies] as an optional subject.*

*C: I think that is already an option in about 20 upper secondary schools and in some areas, it has become mandatory. Many upper secondary schools are fighting for it to become one of the mandatory subjects in general.*

*I: Would you describe that as something positive?*

*C: Very positive indeed and it shows during classes and on exams. Students ask why it is not a mandatory subject in primary, secondary school as well as upper secondary school. This is how the students experience it. The subject brings such a revival, and students experience this as the strongest instrument for gender equality”* (resp. 20.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>112</sup> academic creator.

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<sup>109</sup> Original quote: “Nemendur í Háskóla Íslands eru ekki mjög meðvitaðir um jafnréttismál miðað við þessar útkomu úr könnuninni og hafa ekki kynnt sér hvort að það séu jafnréttisáætlanir. Hafa ekki þælt í því hvað á að gera ef upp kemur kynferðislegt ofbeldi”

<sup>110</sup> Original quote: “Það er eitt mikilvægt sem að mér finnst að verða að gerast: að við verðum að taka kynjafræði kennslu inn á fyrstu skólastigum í gegnum alla skóla. Það er stór póstur í að ná þessu áleiðis sko”

<sup>111</sup> Original quote: Já ég held það, eins og öll fræðsla eins og bara jafnréttisfræðsla í skólum og leiksólum og allt það sko. Ég held reyndar, ég held að leikskólar séu að standa sig best í þessu. Þetta skólakerfi er svo fast í einhverjum hefðum og venjum að það eiginlega ekki hægt að breyta því”

<sup>112</sup> Original quote: “I: En nú er verið að byrja að starta þessu í menntaskólum að hafa það sem valfög.

C: Það er held ég komið í um 20 menntaskóla og á sumum sviðum er þetta skylda. Þar sem að mörg í menntaskólanum eru að berjast fyrir er að þetta verði bara eitt af skyldufögnum.

I: Myndi þér finnast það jákvætt að fleri tækju þetta upp?

C: Alveg afskaplega jákvætt og þetta er það sem kemur fram í tímum og þetta er það sem kemur fram á prófum. Nemendur segja bara afhverju er þetta ekki skyldufag í leikskóla, grunnskóla, framhaldsskóla. Þannig að það er svolítið það sem nemendur upplifa. Þetta verður svo ótrúleg vakning og nemendur upplifa þetta sem bara í raun sterkasta tækið til að vinna í jafnrétti”

In the last excerpt an academic creator claims that students question why these courses are not provided at an earlier stage as mandatory because it is such an eye-opener for them. In fact, this is a fairly recent development which these students may not have experienced themselves. A femocrat creator also questions why it is only optional in secondary and upper secondary school and not even an option for the teacher's academy:

*“I think the school should take responsibility and make it as part of the main curriculum. I think it is important that they follow up on this. It has been a few years since the adoption in main curricula, and I do not think that we are there yet that the schools take up the responsibility. I find it absurd that Gender Studies is not mandatory for teachers. I just do not understand it! And if you just bluntly look at it from the main curriculum: how is this not a mandatory subject? It is taught on occasion when there is enough interest, but it is just a choice. So, you have a lot of teachers who want to teach equality, but they are not doing it, they do not know how. They do not have the foundation for it. I find it necessary to integrate it, not as a choice, but as a compulsory subject”* (resp. 19.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>113</sup> femocrat creator.

The gender expertise is here stressed as a positive attribute to have as a teacher, but also for other functions. In terms of job perspectives, one of the creators stated that Iceland is one of the few countries where Gender Studies can enhance your jobs perspectives:

*“Yes, I think that the most important thing about the Icelandic equality endeavors, are the boring terms of feminism: femocrats. What is happening in Iceland, and that is also thanks to the legislation of 2008, is that now companies and organizations with 25 or more employees are obliged by law to emphasize equality issues. Then you need a person who can create a gender equality action plan and can become an equal rights representative in the company. This would then require the company to hire someone that has a degree in Gender Studies. We have raised quite a lot of women and men from the Gender Studies discipline. These gender equality efforts then go to all the workplaces and start to change things from the inside. We've got this enormous number of people, it's not that woman are working fairly isolated in the companies on these issues. In fact, these are very strong women and together I think there's been a lot of things happening behind the scenes. This is absolutely remarkable, Iceland is one of the few countries in the world where you go to study Gender Studies in order to increase the likelihood of getting a job. This is of course a wonderful situation, just a great country in which we live in”* (resp. 21.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>114</sup> social creator.

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<sup>113</sup> Original quote: “Mér finnst að skólinn eigi að axla ábyrgð og gera það samkvæmt aðalnámsskrá. Mér finnst bara mjög mikilvægt að því sé fylgt eftir. Það eru orðin þónokkur ár síðan að ný aðalnámsskrá var samþykkt og ég held að við séum ekki komin þangað að skólarnir séu að axla ábyrgðina. Mér finnst fátíðlegt að kynjafræði sé ekki skyldufag meðal kennara. Ég bara skil það ekki! Og er þú bara horfir ískalt út frá aðalnámsskrá. Hvernig má það vera að það sé ekki skyldufag? Það er kennt öðru hvoru þegar að það er nægur áhugi, en það er bara valfag. Svo ertu með fullt af kennurum sem langar að kenna jafnrétti, en þeir eru ekki að gera það, þeir kunna það ekki. Þeir hafa ekki grunninn. Mér fyndist það þurfa að koma inn sem, ekki sem valfag heldur sem skyldufag”

<sup>114</sup> Original quote: “Já ég held að það sem mestu máli skiptir um íslenska jafnréttisbaráttu, það eru leiðinlegu hugtök feminísmans það er hérna femokratarnir. Það sem er semsagt að gerast á Íslandi er að gerast og líka bara út af löggjöfinni 2008, er það að nú erum við búin að skylda fyrirtæki og stofnanir sem eru með 25 eða fleiri starfsmenn að hafa jafnréttisáherslur. Þá þarftu að hafa manneskju sem kann að búa til jafnréttisáætlun og getur verið jafnréttisfulltrúi í fyrirtækinu. Þá þarftu að ráða manneskju sem hefur kynjafræði menntun. Við erum búin að ala upp alveg óstjórnlega mikið af konum og körlum í kynjafræði og í þessari jafnréttishugsjón sem síðan fer út á vinnustaðina og alla vinnustaðina og byrjar að breyta hlutunum innan frá. Við erum komin með þennan

As for the collaboration with academia, the femocrats and the departments they work for value academic knowledge. The creators are invited to open lectures on gender research, which some of them occasionally go to. Next to that, the teams at the ministry use academic research on gender equality issues in their reports<sup>115</sup>. One of the femocrat creators addresses enthusiasm for working more closely with the academic community in order to get deeper and more holistic results:

*I: Do you work with research?*

*C: Parallel. So, we have not been doing that. But now in all ministries we have someone who manages the gendered statistics, so that's kind of the first step. And we also have steering committees in all ministries who are mapping and dealing with issues at each ministry, and so there is some research done in this way, or that's how the status of the sexes is determined of each particular issue. But of course, in some places, we need to dive much deeper. And it would be very interesting to get like something from the university community or someone from the outside because we have no time for a thorough analysis" (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>116</sup> femocrat creator.*

What these examples show is that Gender Studies and feminism is highly valued in Icelandic society. There is an awareness of distributing gender knowledge into all educational levels which would profit the advancement of gender equality issues. There are also courses offered to the civil servants at the ministries to improve their knowledge from the Gender Studies discipline (if they do not have it already). Most of the creators I spoke with did indeed have some sort of Gender Studies background through either courses or workshops. This became clear during the interviews as many of the respondents expressed their knowledge on intersectionality from Crenshaw's work. Next to that, feminism is currently a hot topic due to the attention Iceland gets on an international scale, which helps with the popularity of the feminist claims according to the creators. These claims are not in as high demands in the Netherlands, even though the creators I spoke all argue their importance for gender equality policies.

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gífurlega fjölda, þetta er ekki ein og ein kona sem vinnur þarna í fyrirtækinu dálítið einangruð. Heldur er þetta mjög sterkar konur og saman held ég að það sé verið að gera ýmislegt á bak við tjöldin. Þetta er ótrúlega merkilegt, Ísland er eitt fárra landa í heiminum þar sem að þú ferð í kynjafræði til þess að auka líkurnar á því að fá starf. Þetta er náttúrulega bara frábær staða, bara frábært land sem að við búum í"

<sup>115</sup> See references in bibliography published by Ministry of Welfare / Velferðarráðuneytið.

<sup>116</sup> Original quote: "I: Eruð þið að vinna með rannsóknum?"

C: Samhliða. Sko við höfum ekki verið að gera það. En núna erum við með í öllum ráðuneytum aðila sem halda utan um kyngreind tölfræðigögn, þannig að það er svolítið fyrsta skrefið. Og svo höfum við verið með svona eins og stýrihópa í öllum ráðuneytum sem eiga að kortleggja og fylgjast með málefnum sem hvers ráðuneytis fyrir sig og þar inni eru svona litlar rannsóknir þannig séð, eða svona þá er kortlagt hver er staða kynjanna innan þessa málaflokks. En auðvitað á sumum stöðum að þá þurfum við að kafa miklu dýpra. Og þá væri mjög áhugavert að fá eins og eitthvað frá háskólasamfélaginu eða einhverjum ytra því að við höfum ekkert alltaf tíma til að fara í djúpar greiningar"

## The Netherlands

Being a Gender Studies graduate student myself, I have experienced the higher demands of Gender Studies discipline in the Netherlands. It is however only available in higher education. As for its knowledge integration into the political structure, the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (nl. Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau) has some of the previous women's studies employees working there on women's issues (resp. 15.03.2018, The Netherlands). Apart from that, I did meet creators that had a Gender Studies background in the Netherlands, some of which were civil servants. The current recruitment system of civil servants now hinders the flow of expertise into the government. The only way to become a civil servant in the Netherlands is a traineeship:

*“In order to enter the government one almost always needs to go through the national traineeship”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>117</sup> femocrat creator.

The current trainee recruitment system and employee policy at the ministry involve the employees to change positions after seven years of employment as explained by the femocrat creator:

*“There is official personnel policy that after seven years you have to start working somewhere else within the government. [...] So it is not that we are all eternal emancipation employees. There is little flow of the women's movement. No most people come more from other civil positions”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>118</sup> femocrat creator.

According to this excerpt there seems to be an internal system to fill the positions as civil servants which makes it almost impossible for the flow of people to come from the women's movement. One could then question how the demands from the women's movement are implemented if the civil servants have no experience in that field. I emphasize almost impossible, for the example from the femocrat creator claims that there are exceptions to the rule and that there should be more flow from the field:

*“But yes ... because it is only possible to enter the government as a trainee, it is not a 100%, but almost. That is why there are not many people coming into the establishment who have spent years working elsewhere on emancipation. [...] I think that there should be more. There could be more diversity in the team. From the outside or other kinds of people you know”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>119</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>117</sup> Original quote: “Om de overheid binnen te komen dat gaat vaak bijna altijd via het rijkstraineeship”

<sup>118</sup> Original quote: “Er is officieel personeelsbeleid dat na 7 jaar moet je eigenlijk ergens anders gaan werken binnen de overheid. [...] Dus het is niet zo dat we allemaal eeuwigen emancipatie medewerkers zijn. Er is weinig doorstroming van de vrouwenbeweging. Nee de meeste mensen komen meer vanuit de ambtelijke kant”

<sup>119</sup> Original quote: “Maar ja.. door dat het alleen maar mogelijk is om als trainee binnen te komen bij de overheid, is niet 100% zo maar toch wel bijna. Daardoor komen er niet heel veel mensen die jarenlang elders bezig zijn met emancipatie. [...] ik vind dat er meer zou moeten zijn. Er zou meer diversiteit in zon team kunnen zijn hoor. Van de buitenkant of andere soort mensen ofzo weet je wel”

This traineeship, according to the Dutch femocrat creator only allows for a certain kind of person (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). Someone who is smart, easy going, flexible, talented and with a master's degree. As the example above shows: "this selection does not lead to much diversity", it only selects "the exceptionally well-articulated and smart person, not that I am against that, only the team also needs diversity" (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). One can apply, at the latest a year after graduation. You hereby need to be fresh out of university. The femocrat creator then explained that the trainees are then introduced to the different scopes of working at the ministry for two whole years as a trainee (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). What this does is mold a freshly picked individual into a governmental representative, leaving not much room for personal activism or broader orientation of the civil movements for example. The traineeship can be described as a certain civil body machinery that introduces a person to its governmental functions. There are however exception to the rule according to the femocrat creators. When they do have the Gender Studies background or experience from the field, one femocrat creators expresses the difficulty of translating that knowledge into practice:

*"I do have the background to some degree, but now it has been so long since I was fully engaged with it, so I may not be up to date. But the people and also activists who are very critical, they are absolutely right, but you just try to raise the figure from 14 to 16% with very intersectional glasses. Somewhere you have to be pragmatic and look: ok, what can we do, to make policy for a majority of people that will produce some sort of results? And sometimes you do not succeed as well"* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>120</sup> femocrat creator.

Here the femocrat creator shows that although you have the knowledge, certain influences or politics do not allow for significant changes. Another femocrat creator had a similar experience of being able to make minor changes:

*"Here [in this position] I can sometimes do small things ... yes, sometimes there are little things that you get done. It is often small things that just cause them to think about what effect it has. Then you are already happy you know. They are seldom if ever world-shocking things that you can reach as a femocrat. Yes, that is due to the political context. If we had a completely different parliament and a different cabinet then you would obviously be able to do a lot more"* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>121</sup> femocrat creator.

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<sup>120</sup> Original quote: "Ik heb wel enig sinds die achtergrond dus al loop ik nu wel achter want het is echt wel een tijdje geleden dat ik er helemaal in zat. Maar dat mensen en ook activisten die heel kritisch zijn, ze hebben helemaal gelijk, maar probeer maar eens het cijfer van 14 naar 16% op te krikken met een heel intersectionele bril. Ergens moet je pragmatisch zijn en kijken: ok wat kunnen we wel doen, om toch ook beleid te maken voor heel veel mensen dat resultaat gaat opleveren? En soms doe je het dan niet goed"

<sup>121</sup> Original quote: "Hier kan ik soms met kleine dingetjes...ja het zijn soms kleine dingetjes die je voor elkaar krijgt. Het zijn vaak kleine dingen dat er alleen al voor zorgt dat ze er over gaan nadenken wat voor effect het heeft. Dan ben je al blij weet je wel. Het zijn zelden of nooit wereldschokkende dingen die je dan bereikt als femocraat. Ja dat ligt dan aan de politieke context. Als we een heel ander parlement zou hebben en een ander kabinet dan zou je natuurlijk veel meer doen"

Continuing this excerpt the femocrat creator later explained what those small things actually were: getting a footnote saying that the policy may have some sort of effect on gender would be one of those small steps. The position as a femocrat creator allows for the translation of the feminist agenda into policy changes or adjustments. The fact is that the femocrat creators translate their knowledge to others and achieve small changes from the inside which is exactly what Findlay (2015) and Verloo and Lombardo (2007) claim is needed for well-functioning gender equality policies. The flow from the women's movement or Gender Studies to the government as described earlier is not easily actualized in the Netherlands. One of the things standing in the way of the flow of more femocrats in these functions is the aforementioned recruitment system and employee policy. The negative connotations towards feminism in Dutch society may also play a role in the lack of femocrats. That does not give away the fact that the creators I spoke to are feminist and have the awareness as illustrated in the excerpts. They all have their own ideas on how gender equality can be improved in their society, which is addressed in the next subsection.

## The creator's visions of improvement for the gender equality policies

*The labour market, goals of gender equality, feminist tools and intersectionality*

In this subsection, the creators express their visions of improvement of gender equality policies. More specifically, the creators express whether and how gender equality can be achieved and with which tools. For some creators, improvements can be made through the international tools such as gender mainstreaming, gender quota and budgeting as described by Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel (2013). What is important to have in mind while analyzing the creator's perspective is the ethos of neoliberalism, often linked to the market (Cox 2007), which may or may not affect their ideas on gender equality as a market-oriented construction.

### **Labour market**

The main issues or tasks in gender equality in Iceland and the Netherlands relate to the labour market according to the creators. Issues vary from gender segregation in the labour market (due to educational and career choices), equal wages and gender-based violence/assault in the workplace.

The study and career choices are the foundations to the segregation in the labour market and gender-based violence as described by the Icelandic and Dutch creators:

*“What I think are currently the most prominent projects in gender equality are focused on gender-based violence and harassment which is surfacing now. And then the gender segregation in the labour market, that there is a gender gap in a very wide variety of society. We need to have a look at, I mean it does not necessarily mean that it's bad, but we need to find our way in this debate: Do we want a single profession that is 98% women and another one that is 98% male? Is that something we're happy with? Or do we want to change it? If so, then we need to go for it. Sometimes I feel a bit annoyed when I mean, of course, people get the same salary for similar jobs. And it is absolutely something that we can achieve. But I still feel that equality in the labour market does not become reality when [equal wages] have been achieved. I sometimes feel that it is left out of the discussion. But yes, I would say that these two things are mostly but personally I do, yes, I find it all interesting, everything involving gendered roles and upbringing and all that” (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>122</sup> femocrat creator.*

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<sup>122</sup> Original quote: “En mér finnst samt svona áberandi fyrir kynjajafnrétti núna, sko áberandi mikilvæg verkefni eru þá þetta kynbundna ofbeldi og áreitni sem er að koma rosalega mikið upp á yfirborðið núna. Og svo bara kynja skipting vinnnumarkaðs, að það sé kynjaskipting mjög margs í þjóðfélaginu. Við þurfum svolítið að líta á, ég meina það þarf ekki endilega að vera að það sé slæmt, en við þurfum að mynda okkur stefnu í því: viljum við hafa eina stétt sem er 98% konur og aðra stétt sem eru 98% karlar? Er það eitthvað sem við erum ánægð með? Eða viljum við breyta því? Og þá þarf markvisst að fara í það. Það fer stundum svolítið í taugarnar á mér þegar, ég meina auðvitað á fólk að fá sömu laun fyrir sambærileg störf. Og það er algjört lágmark að við náum því. En mér finnst samt að jafnrétti á vinnnumarkaði ekki vera komið þegar það er einhvernvegin orðið að veruleika. Mér finnst það stundum aðeins verða undir í umræðunni. En já ég myndi segja að þessi tvö atriði aðallega en persónulega hef ég já mér finnst allt voða áhugavert allt sem er svona einhvernvegin kynbundið og kynhlutverk, uppeldi, kynjað uppeldi og allt þetta”



*“There are of course, two big projects that rest on our society and have not changed over time, ie. violence against women which is common and hardly punished, offered resources and then it is, of course, a difference in wages and that the sexes do not have equal agreements”* (resp. 21.12.2107, Iceland)<sup>123</sup> social creator.

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*“This is my personal vision again, the neoliberal thinking of freedom of choice. Women choose to work less and depend on their husbands ... yes, but choices are never made in a vacuum. And regardless of whether it is a choice, you can still wonder whether the outcome is not problematic if we have to question that choice. Because poverty is a gendered problem in the Netherlands. It is mainly women with children who are poor”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>124</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“Women work a lot part-time. But we also have the idea that they choose it for themselves. Of course, that is partly true ... but what motivated these choices, what is the culture that thrives here which makes it more normal for women than men to work part-time. The responsibility of care is much more with the women’s tasks than with the men’s. And the responsibility of finance resides more with men, and that kind of context that influences the choices that people make”* (resp. 01.03.2018a, The Netherlands)<sup>125</sup> social creator.

As these excerpts show, there is a different emphasis on the labour market according to the Dutch and Icelandic creators. The Dutch creators even argue that is *the* arena where women seem to lack behind due to the neoliberal agenda of freedom of choice. The Icelandic creators emphasize the segregation of the labour market to be one of the main areas to improve gender-based violence, stemming from the #metoo movement. As for gender equality in general, there were several reflections on whether it could be achieved.

### ***Gender equality as a goal***

One of Ellerby’s (2017) suggestions to improve gender equality is through self-reflection. In this section the creators reflect on whether gender equality can be achieved and how. The visions of how that project could be achieved differed between the Icelandic and Dutch creators:

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<sup>123</sup> Original quote: “Það eru auðvitað þessi tvö stóru verkefni sem hvíla á samfélaginu okkar og hafa ekki breyst í gegnum tíðina þ.e. ofbeldi gegn konum sem er algengt og varla refsað fyrir, fá úrræði í boði og síðan er það að sjálfsögðu kjaramismunun að kynin eru ekki með jöfn kjör”

<sup>124</sup> Original quote: “Dit is mijn persoonlijke visie weer, het neoliberale denken van keuzevrijheid. Vrouwen kiezen er toch voor om zelf minder te werken en afhankelijk te zijn van hun man...ja maar keuzes worden nooit in een vacuüm genomen. En los van of het een keuze is dan kun je nog afvragen of de uitkomst niet zo problematisch is, dat we toch die keuze moeten bevragen. Want armoede is een gendered probleem in Nederland. Het zijn voornamelijk vrouwen met kinderen die arm zijn”

<sup>125</sup> Original quote: “Vrouwen werken enorm veel deeltijd. Maar we hebben ook het idee dat ze er zelf voor kiezen. Dat is natuurlijk deels zomaar wel ...maar waar worden die keuzes ingegeven, wat is de cultuur die hier leeft waar het normaler is voor vrouwen dan mannen om deeltijd te gaan werken. Die verantwoordelijkheid van zorg nog veel meer bij de vrouwen ligt dan bij de mannen. En de verantwoordelijk van financiën meer bij mannen ligt, en dat soort context at heel veel invloed heeft op keuzes die mensen maken”

*“I think, I do not think that there will be perfect equality here sometime. I think we always need to consider that our society will evolve and change, and it will always have some sort of power structure. This is, of course, the power structure we are trying to fight. So, I think we will never achieve equality. This is just something we always need to watch out for. This is somehow, this is an eternal project and there will always be new challenges. So, I think it’s important to keep in mind that this will never be done, it will never be a finished task”* (resp. 11.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>126</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“I do not think it is possible to achieve complete equality. I think this will always be something going back and forth. And it’s always like this: we take two steps forward and then we take one step backward. That is how it works, and there will be both resistance and backlashes”* (resp. 11.12.2107, Iceland)<sup>127</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“This is an eternal project and there will always be a new challenge. So, I think it’s important to keep in mind that this will never be done, it will never be a task done. Equality representatives will never be unnecessary. We will always have to be there to face new challenges”* (resp. 08.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>128</sup> social creator.

Here the Icelandic femocrat and social creators give the most frequent answer to whether gender equality can be achieved. They perceive the issues regarding gender equality as a constant fight. The Dutch creators are more inclined to think that gender equality is possible if efforts towards achieving it are made:

*“I: When do you think equality will be achieved, if it is even possible?”*

*C: Yes. I think equality can exist. If you look at the Global Gender Gap Index then it will take us 100 years to achieve it in the Netherlands if we do nothing”* (resp. 05.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>129</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“Ehm ... yes, I think equality, the recognition that men and women are equal and with equal opportunities. A lot of equal rights are in fact all agreed upon, and people often say: we have equal rights, then we are done right? But we still do not have equal opportunities and*

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<sup>126</sup> Original quote: “Sko ég held að, sko ég sé ekki fyrir mér að það verði hérna fullkomið jafnrétti einhverntímann. Ég held að við þurfum alltaf að vera að vega og meta af því að samfélagið okkar mun þróast og breytast og það verður alltaf einhver valdastrúktúr. Þetta er auðvitað bara valda strúktúrinn sem við erum að reyna að berjast við. Þannig að ég held að við munum aldrei ná jafnrétti. Þetta er bara eitthvað sem við þurfum alltaf að horfa á. Þetta er einhvernvegin, þetta er eilífðarverkefni og það verður alltaf ný áskorun. Þannig að mér finnst að það þurfi að hafa það í huga að þetta verður aldrei búið, þetta verður aldrei verkefni sem klárast”

<sup>127</sup> Original quote: “Ég held að það sé ekki hægt að ná algjöru jafnrétti. Ég held að þetta sé alltaf fram og aftur. Og þetta er alltaf sko svona: við förum tvo skref áfram og þá förum við eitt skref aftur á bak. Það er bara þannig og það er bæði mótstaða og það er bakslag”

<sup>128</sup> Original quote: “Þetta er eilífðarverkefni og það verður alltaf ný áskorun. Þannig að mér finnst að það þurfi að hafa það í huga að þetta verður aldrei búið, þetta verður aldrei verkefni sem klárast. Jafnréttisfulltrúar verða aldrei óþarfir. Við munum alltaf þurfa að vera til staðar til að takast á við nýjar áskoranir”

<sup>129</sup> Original quote: “I: Wanneer denk je dat gelijkheid kan bestaan en kan dat wel?”

C: Ja. nou ik denk dat er gelijkheid kan bestaan. Als je naar die Global Gender Gap Index kijkt dan gaan we er nog 100 jaar over doen in Nederland, als we niks doen”

*that is the essence of [the organisation] that it does not matter whether you are born as a boy or a girl. Ehm I think yes ... if it will ever....it is the pursuit that we are no longer needed, that we can discontinue our work. Not on the short term but, hmmm yes...”* (resp. 01.03.2018a, The Netherlands)<sup>130</sup> social creator.

These Dutch creators are hopeful that gender equality could someday be achieved. There was, however, one Dutch creator that interprets gender equality as an eternal struggle, simulating the responses from the Icelandic creators:

*“C: No. That is a utopia. Ehm..I believe that emancipation is a process that we need to continue working on. So, once it exists then you have to keep working very hard to maintain that equality, the modes of equality. I also believe that there are always other points of interests. Yes.*

*I: It's a never-ending story*

*C: Yes, and it is very important for us to realize that and the things that we've won now, that there are no certainties at all”* (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>131</sup> femocrat creator.

These excerpts show the subjective nature of the concept gender equality. As previous chapters have shown, the concept has various definitions which makes it difficult to conclude whether gender equality can be achieved as it is ‘bent’, ‘stretched’ and ‘fixed’ for their own purposes (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009: 3). Having a Gender Studies background or a gender awareness contributes to similar answers from the Icelandic and Dutch creators. These individuals see gender equality as an eternal struggle. This may be an example of the importance of having gender awareness as argued by Findlay (2015). The gender awareness also contributes to the way in which the creators see the purpose and importance of implementing the feminist tools for gender equality endeavours.

### ***Use of feminist tools***

As previous discussion at the beginning of chapter four on quota showed, the perspective on using such tools differ. Icelandic creators gave examples of their own work and how they used the feminist tools, but the Dutch did not. It is for this reason that only the perspective of gender mainstreaming is reflected

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<sup>130</sup> Original quote: “Ehm...ja ik denk gelijkwaardigheid, de erkenning dat mannen en vrouwen gelijkwaardig zijn en met gelijke kansen. Heel veel gelijke rechten zijn in principe al geregeld, en daar zeggen mensen vaak: we hebben toch gelijke rechten, dan is het toch gewoon klaar? Maar de gelijke kansen zijn er niet en dat is soort van de kern van [de organisatie] dat het voor de kansen niet uitmaakt of je als jongen of als meisje wordt geboren. Ehm denk ik ja...of het ooit....het is wel het streven dat we ooit niet meer nodig zijn, dat we ons kunnen opheffen. Niet op korte termijn maar, hmmm ja..”

<sup>131</sup> Original quote: “C: Nee. Dat is een utopia. Ehm..ik geloof dus dat emancipatie een proces is waarvan je altijd moet blijven werken. Dus als die eenmaal bestaan dan moet je heel hard blijven werken om die gelijkheid vast te houden, de mate van gelijkheid. Ik geloof ook dat er altijd andere belangen zijn. Ja.

I: Het is een never-ending-story

C: Ja en dat is heel belangrijk om je dat te beseffen en dat dingen die we nu gewonnen hebben, dat dat helemaal geen zekerheden zijn”

upon because that was mentioned by all creators to be a point of emphasis. Gender mainstreaming is a tool that was implemented on an international scale during the UN's International Women's year in 1975 (Caglar, Prügl and Zwingel 2013: 1). Gender mainstreaming is applied in governing as an analysis of how gendered aspects of the policy or legislation (Outshoorn and Kantola 2007). Icelandic policies and legislation use all feminist tools, while the Dutch do not. The creators from both countries share the feeling that there should be more emphasis on gender mainstreaming or re-evaluation of policies with a gendered lens:

*“In our society, one of the tasks left to achieve equality is to find ways to work on the indirect systematic discrimination that is just accidentally present which we cannot see. We need to analyze this in order to overcome it. That is of course what gender mainstreaming is working towards. I feel we have to do that if we are going to continue to succeed”* (resp. 12.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>132</sup> femocrat creator.

*“... gender mainstreaming simply remains necessary at all times. Yes, perhaps unless when gender equality has been achieved, then it may not be necessary anymore”* (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>133</sup> femocrat creator.

These examples show that gender mainstreaming is something that will always be needed, apart from the Dutch creator which states it will not be needed if gender equality has been achieved. This is again the main issue that separates the thinking pattern of the Icelandic from the Dutch: gender equality as an eternal struggle against the idea that gender equality is a fixed goal.

### ***Intersectionality***

The issue of intersectionality comes forth in both countries as needing improvement. Creators from both countries say that they are working towards more intersectionality:

*“If you really have all the characteristics or whatever you want to call it, that you could integrate... well you can not, because then you really have a policy for a small group of people, so you just accept it. Yes, ethnicity is a part of it, that is integrated. In both gender equality and LGBTI. But we are not the emancipation of ... at SZW you have a department for integration. So, in itself, the position of ethnic minorities is not one of our tasks. And the position of the elderly is also not in our department nor is the position of disabled*

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<sup>132</sup> Original quote: “Í okkar samfélagi núna sem er eftir til að ná jafnrétti þá er einna helst að finna leiðir til að vinna á þessu óbeinu kerfislægri mismunun sem að er bara óvart til staðar og við sjáum ekki. Við þurfum að greina hana og vinna bug á henni. Það er náttúrulega það sem kynja-sambættingin er að vinna með að breyta. Mér finnst við verða að fara þangað ef við ætlum að halda áfram að ná árangri”

<sup>133</sup> Original quote: “... maar gender mainstreaming blijft gewoon altijd nodig. Ja misschien tenzij er helemaal gendergelijkheid is bereikt, dan hoeft dat misschien niet meer”

*people. So, you have all kinds of ... yes, that is all part of other ministries” (resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands)<sup>134</sup> femocrat creator.*

In this excerpt, the femocrat creator gives a good overview of how intersectionality is actually hindered in the Netherlands by the organization of all of the intersectional categories. The issues are spread across ministries, which makes it difficult to unite. At the same time a Dutch social creator hints towards the lack of intersectionality and long-term solutions on that matter in relation to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals:

*“C: I think that thinking intersectionally in the Netherlands still needs to be established and the policy is not yet embedded enough either. And even among the political parties and the government, I miss a very long-term vision. Kind of, we want to achieve the SDGs of the UN for example. We have committed ourselves to that. How are we going to guarantee that we will succeed?*

*I: Before 2030?*

*C: Exactly, what must happen in the short term, there really needs to be some acceleration in these measures. But you do not see that in policy. It is a bit like ‘what is going on now and let’s respond to that now’” (resp. 01.03.2018a, The Netherlands)<sup>135</sup> social creator.*

It is not that the creators are not aware of this lack of intersectionality, they are, but it is often difficult to integrate all the categories into one policy as mentioned above (resp. 04.04.2018, The Netherlands; resp. 04.05.2018, The Netherlands). Iceland has not had a policy or legislation regarding ethnic minorities until fairly recently (11.06.2018) when parliament accepted an act on equal treatment regardless of race and ethnicity<sup>136</sup>. The local municipality does however work with intersectionality as an Icelandic creator shows:

*“C: So, we have the Human Rights Agency here and we see to it to follow the human rights policy of the City of Iceland, which has a wider emphasis than just gender. We use a tactical approach called intersectionality, a term used in the academic environment, to see how things intersect. I often consider this as just yarn. Something like a ball of yarn which is unraveled and there are so many strings, we are somehow, you know, it is all connected.*

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<sup>134</sup> Original quote: “Als je echt alle kenmerken of hoe je het ook wil noemen die je mee zou kunnen nemen bij ... ja dat kan niet want dan krijg je echt een beleid op te kleine groepjes dus je doet het wel een beetje. Ja maar zeker etniciteit wordt wel gedaan jazeker. Bij zowel bij gendergelijkheid als bij LHBTI. Maar wij zijn niet de emancipatie van... van bij SZW heb je directie integratie. Dus op zichzelf de positie van etnische minderheden valt niet onder ons. En de positie van ouderen valt ook niet onder ons of gehandicapten valt ook niet onder ons. Dus je hebt allerlei ... ja dat hoort allemaal bij andere ministeries”

<sup>135</sup> Original quote: “C: Ik denk dat intersectioneel denken in Nederland ook wel voet aan de grond krijgt maar dat het ook het beleid nog niet genoeg is ingebed. En überhaupt bij de politieke partijen en bij de overheid mis ik heel erg langetermijnvisie. Soort van, we willen hier naartoe bijvoorbeeld bij de SDG's van de VN. Daar hebben we ons op toegelegd. Hoe gaan we garanderen dat het gaat lukken?

I: Voor 2030?

C: Precies, wat moet er dan op korte termijn, er moet echt die versnelling komen. Maar dat zie je niet terug in beleid. Het is een beetje: wat speelt er nu en laten we daar nu op reageren”

<sup>136</sup> See <http://www.althingi.is/thingstorf/thingmalalistar-efrir-thingum/ferill/?ltg=148&mnr=393>

I: Are you referring to Donna Haraway?

C: *Definitely Donna Haraway! That is all her*” (resp. 19.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>137</sup> femocrat creator.

Here the Icelandic femocrat creator articulates the knowledge of intersectionality while referring to one of the feminist scholars, Donna Haraway. More specifically, through video material<sup>138</sup> Haraway explains the way to untangle the ball of meanings of which everything is connected in cultural production. With this explanation, the femocrat creator gives me the impression of the gender knowledge and how it is used in their work in the bureaucracy. Secondly, the creator later gives an example of how the category of gender usually keeps the upper hand in conversations and actions, hindering an intersectional approach:

*“I think it has changed a lot how people want to talk about gender equality. It’s much bigger, it’s somehow so that there are so many people that have... [the category] gender is portrayed as the default and there are so many people not aware of that. You may have a family, where someone is queer, or you have friends who are immigrants or something like that. You have experience with other groups of people. As soon as you start talking about them and their status and then connect them to [the category] gender, then people somehow start to listen”* (resp. 19.12.2017, Iceland)<sup>139</sup> femocrat creator.

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*“I think intersectionality cannot be understated enough, there’s a reason there’s a specific group for foreign women in Iceland because they go through different experiences, unlike regular women. There are other factors that might trump genders sometimes, like race for instance”* (resp. 30.01.2017, Iceland)<sup>140</sup> social creator.

As these examples show, there is a feeling of wanting to engage more with intersectional approaches, due to its absence in policy. The creator’s knowledge of intersectionality and the way the creators stress the problem of applying intersectional policies is the first step towards change. In the Dutch context, the creators describe the fragmentation of the different issues of the departments. In Iceland a recent addition to the legislative force has been implemented which effects are yet to be determined.

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<sup>137</sup> Original quote: “C: Svo er mannréttindaskrifstofan hér og við sjáum um það að fylgja eftir mannréttinda stefnu Reykjavíkurborgar og við erum bara með aðrar áherslur heldur en bara kyn. Við notum semsagt nálgun sem í akademíunni kallast intersectionality þar sem við erum að sjá hvernig hlutirnir skerast saman. Oft lít eg á þetta sem þetta sem bara garn. Einhverskonar hnykill sem er að raknar upp og það eru svona allskonar þræðir, við erum einhvernveginn, þú veist þetta tengist allt. [...]”

I: Áttu við Donna Haraway?

C: Algerlega Donna Haraway, bara alveg! Það er bara hún sko. Það er alveg rétt”

<sup>138</sup> For video see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJlO6A5VXU>

<sup>139</sup> Original quote: “Mér finnst það hafa breyst mjög mikið hvernig fólk vill tala um kynjajafnrétti. Það er miklu meiri, sko það er einhvernveginn þannig að það eru svo margir sem hafa ... kyn er svo sjálfgefið og það eru eitthvað svo margir sem eru aldrei eitthvað að hugsa um það. Svo áttu kannski fjölskyldu þar sem að einhver er hinseginn eða þú átt vini sem eru innflytjendur eða eitthvað þannig. Þú ert með reynslu af öðrum hópum. Um leið og þú byrjar að tala um þá og þeirra stöðu og svo tengja þau inn í kyn þá fer fólk einhvernveginn að hlusta”

<sup>140</sup> Interview was conducted in English.

## Summary of chapter four

According to scholarship on gender equality policies, the factors of sustainability lie within the knowledge, standpoints, and emphasise the ones working in the field of gender equality policy. This chapter has given insight into those factors. During the interviews with the creators, I learned about their position in the policy-making process, their knowledge, and their visions of improvement.

The first section of the chapter described the different ways in which the creators conceptualized gender equality. From that analysis, it can be argued that the conceptualization differs to the extent that the Dutch creators 'fixed' gender equality towards the emancipation of women's/LGBTI whereas in Iceland they 'bent' equality to mean gender equality (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). The creators differ in the conceptualization of feminism and quota. They are both essential in Iceland for gender equality whilst having bad connotations in the Netherlands.

The second section had an emphasis on the creator's descriptions of their history, religion, culture, and politics, the creators showed the environment in which gender equality can or cannot manoeuvre according to them. In Iceland, the creators described their culture and politics deriving from the Viking period with a hard-working mentality based on a survival mode of an 'all or nothing' mentality. The Dutch society was described as conservative working on a model for consensus which was according to the creators very time-consuming in decision making. The major difference between the societies is the role of religion. The religious influences in Dutch society forms traditional ideas of family structures and gendered roles which effects the political field.

The third aspect of this chapter involved the roles of the feminist triangle. The creators discussed their roles in a similar matter in the Netherlands and Iceland. Both the Icelandic and Dutch creators saw the role of the government as the ones who should be governing and setting the examples for the rest. The only thing that differed was the scope of the governing. The Dutch government is not keen on special measures to attain gender equality. The Dutch creators, on the other hand, wanted to expand on those feminist tools and push them through. In Iceland, where the tools are used, the government needed to be a role model, and implement their special measures on a broader scope according to the creators. They need to lead the way, according to the Icelandic creators and listen to the feminist voices from the women's movements.

The role of the Dutch women's organisations was seen as advisory and monitoring the government's efforts in gender equality through the governmental funding. The Icelandic movement was described to be more linked to the grassroots and listed as being the critical voices from society. Creators from both countries emphasized the need for collaborating with the movement due to their direct connection to society, which was appreciated by all creators. The civil organizations/movements should according to all creators have the role of being watchdogs and keep the government informed of practical developments and things they should improve.

The last entity of the feminist triangle is the integration of academic knowledge into the field of gender equality policies and legislation. This proved to be more of a division between Iceland and the

Netherlands. In Iceland, Gender Studies and feminist epistemology is already integrated into the educational system, for children and adults. In the Netherlands, there is not as much emphasis on coordinating with academia according to the creators, apart from the government's funding of the Institute on Gender Equality.

The chapter ended with visions of improvement which did not differ much between the Icelandic and Dutch creators. The creators' self-reflection led to visions of improvement of the labour market, gender mainstreaming and intersectionality. The foundation of the problem in the labour market is the power structure, the feminized jobs and gender-based violence or other assault. Intersectionality was according to all the creators a point which can be improved by the Icelandic and Dutch government. Creators in both countries addressed the importance of intersectional approaches and the will to change the current policies. That applies to both policies, legislation and in general representation. Overall, the resources that are missing according to the creators in the Netherlands and Iceland and need improvement are the fields of finance, organization and political will. Whether the creators' visions of improvement contribute to the gender equality policies will be elaborated in the conclusion.



## Conclusion

To conclude my analysis I draw a general line of analysis by first answering the sub questions and then the main research question: *‘How do the creators of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands contribute to the sustainability and intersectionality of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?’* ending the conclusion with suggestions for further research.

Subquestion: *‘Is there a cooperative network of the feminist triangle among the creators working and advising on gender equality policies in both countries and if so, how do they operate according to the creators?’*

The first subquestion reflects on the sustainability of gender equality policies. The people working and advising on policies play a crucial role in the endurance of the policies regarding gender equality (Gouws 1996; Verloo and Lombardo 2007; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007; Findlay). For the sake of the sustainability, there have been some speculations on how the policies should be created and by whom. According to Gouws (1996), Verloo and Lombardo (2007) and Findlay (2015), a specific kind of individual with a gender awareness is the most preferred, while working from the inside of the government or advising on gender equality policies. Moreover, there should be a collaboration between multiple agencies whilst constructing, maintaining and monitoring the policies/legislation: the women’s movement and academia (Woodward 2003; Outshoorn and Kantola 2007).

To answer whether there is a cooperative network among the creators working and advising on gender equality in both countries, it can be argued that there is a form of cooperation between the government, women’s movement and academia in both countries. How the cooperating network of the feminist triangle operate in the Netherlands differs from Iceland. I can confirm that the organization of gender equality policies in the Netherlands has been dismantled, as suggested by the study conducted by Outshoorn and Kantola (2007). In recent years, the collaboration between the government, women’s movement and academia has changed to rely on financial agreements. That does not mean that knowledge is not exchanged as the Dutch creators have shown from the examples of the interviews, but that cooperation is often based on funding rather than intellectual exchange. This is something that the Dutch creators want to change. Iceland on the other hand, has a more organic collaboration of the three corners of the triangle (Holli 2008; Woodward 2003; Outshoorn 1997). The feminist triangle of the Icelandic government, academia and women’s movement is not based on financial means but on connections between the creators within these establishments. They all try to advance gender equality policies with their knowledge and experiences has also become clear from the interviews.

In Iceland, the creators had gender awareness, many of which worked inside the government. Next, to that, there was an active relationship with both academia and the women’s movements to the extent that they had their own platform to work on their own projects and criticise the government at a

distance. In the Netherlands, the women's organisations are linked to the government in the sense that they rely on project-based funding. This may be one of the reasons why the organizations, cannot voice their concerns without possibly jeopardizing the organizations' financial existence. All the Dutch creators have a gender awareness, both inside and outside of the government. Although the creators I spoke to working within the government can be confirmed having this awareness, they could not certify that all their colleagues did. In fact, because of the employee policy of internal vacancies in the Dutch government, people outside of government with gender knowledge may not enter as easily into the functions as in Iceland who has open vacancies. This thesis has outlined the similarities and differences of the feminist triangle in Iceland and the Netherlands and how they operate and advance gender equality. How the policies are framed by the creators differ.

Subquestion: *'How do the creators frame gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?'*

This subquestion refers to the ways in which the creators use and frame gender equality. It reflects on whether they address the intersectional approach of gender equality. For this subquestion the policies have been analysed to see how gender equality is framed on paper. Next to that, the way the creators themselves frame gender equality is also reflected upon.

Both countries have taken part in the trend of implementing women-centred policies whilst referring to 'gender equality'. This may be due to the different understandings of what gender equality actually refers to as argued by Verloo and Lombardo (2007). In that sense, one can argue that Icelandic and Dutch policy-makers and advisors have explicitly turned to 'strategic framing' as Verloo and Lombardo describe as a way to make the concept of gender equality enter into the policy arena as a common and accepted goal (Verloo and Lombardo 2007: 22). The Dutch creators in this sense refer to the conceptualisation of gender equality as *sameness*, which frames women equal to men, but that they are only lacking the tools and opportunities to become as successful as men. The Icelandic creators refer to *difference* and to some extent *transformation*, which frames women as different to men and in need of special attention through special measures such as gender mainstreaming or gender quotas.

Icelandic and Dutch creators stress the importance of language and the use of certain terms in their society. As became clear in chapter four, the Icelandic and Dutch creators have different concepts for gender equality, namely '(kynja)jafnrétti' in Icelandic and '(vrouwen) emancipatie' in Dutch. Although the words differ they both reflect on issues relating women and LGBTI, the creators either 'fixed' or 'bent' the terms to mean gender equality (Lombardo, Meier and Verloo 2009). Apart from that, certain terms such as feminism and quota were not as receptive in the Netherlands as it was in Iceland. That does not mean that the ideas or underlying meaning is not applied, but that the terms themselves have bad connotations in society and the political arena. This specific finding shows that the use of a certain language and the way the creators communicate is an important factor in how they can

advance gender equality policies. The study has shown that more attention needs to be paid on the language and the framing of gender equality in order to find solutions to change the policies.

*Subquestion: 'To what extent do the creators advance intersectional approaches in the gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?'*

This subquestion relates to the argument on the lack of intersectionality in gender equality policies. Ellerby (2017) argued for more intersectional policies without suggesting how such change can be realised. This research has looked towards how the people work and advice on such policies. This subquestion investigates to what extent the creators work with intersectional approaches and how they see it advanced to a broader extent.

The creators in Iceland and the Netherlands expressed the need for more intersectional approaches in terms of policies, legislation and general representation. Their ability to advance such changes to the gender equality policies differs to some extent. The political climate is more receptive in Iceland towards the progression of gender equality and the creators in Iceland are in a different position to advance the gender equality policies than in the Netherlands. As the Dutch femocrat creators explained, issues relating intersectional approaches such as education, health, ethnic minorities and migration are situated in other departments. This administrative construction makes it difficult to apply intersectional policies because of the fragmentation within the ministerial structure. This makes realizing intersectional changes challenging according to the creators. As for the Dutch social creators, they seemed more optimistic in creating more awareness of intersectional discrimination in their society through campaigning. A similar trend was discovered in Iceland.

All creators expressed the need for intersectional change, but were troubled by how it could be realised. The issues relating the labour market in Iceland and the Netherlands without the intersectional approach seemed to be easier to realise at the moment. These issues can, according to the creators, be advanced by small steps in the Netherlands through altering or adding certain sentences in current policies and legislation for example. In Iceland the steps were slightly bigger, as a new addition to gender equality policies was added in relation to equal wages this year. Whilst this study can not confirm whether that is a direct result of the extensive collaboration between the creators in the feminist triangle, it did influence the changes to some degree as the demands for change came from the women's movement and labour organisations who demanded such change. What this study also shows is that the steps taken towards gender equality and tools used are often made with a different goal in mind. The steps in Iceland involve all the feminist tools such as gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender quota in their policies and legislation, while the Netherlands do not which may explain the difference in the steps taken towards change.

### ***Research Question answered***

The information gathered above form the foundation to answer the research question: ‘*How do the creators of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands contribute to the sustainability and intersectionality of gender equality policies in Iceland and the Netherlands?*’

The current construction of gender equality policies is according to Ellerby (2017) non-sustainable and not intersectional. My research has been devoted to examining how the creators can make them sustainable and intersectional. After having spoken with 22 Icelandic and 11 Dutch creators, certain conclusions can be made. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that the sustainability of gender equality policies relies on the people working and advising on gender equality in a collaborative network of a feminist triangle. The expertise and position of the creators within the feminist triangle may serve as an answer to Ellerby’s (2017) claim for more intersectional policies so the shortcut to change can be avoided. The cases of Iceland and the Netherlands have shown the dynamics of the feminist triangles and how they can to some extent advance gender equality policies.

Gender equality does not happen overnight. What the creators point out is that change needs to come from society such as cultural shifts if gender equality is to be achieved, if it ever can as argued by all the Icelandic and a few Dutch creators. The creators argue that policies are not sufficient, the implementation can make or break the emphasis on the matter, but it does not determine the status of a country on an international scale per se. What the policies can do is give an indication of what role it plays in each country. However, policies are only a part of dealing with gender equality, and not the ultimate solution, but merely a tool to achieve such goals.

So how do the creators then contribute to the sustainability and intersectionality of gender equality policies? By working collaboratively in a network of a feminist triangle, with their gender awareness in their suggestions towards more intersectional approaches of the policies. In the Netherlands, the creators see the contribution as successful by taking smaller steps such as adding footnotes in existing policies and legislations. In Iceland these steps have been described by the creators as being slightly bigger. All creators expressed that these steps and feminist tools are necessary for social change.

This study has shown the importance of looking beyond gender equality policies and towards the people working and advising on such policies in order to get a better understanding of how the shortcut to change can be avoided. Further studies regarding the role of the feminist triangle would be worthwhile. I suggest expanding the triangle containing the government, women’s movement and academia by involving other establishments into the collaboration, creating a *feminist pentagon*. This feminist pentagon would incorporate the labour unions and media as separate corners in order to map their influence in more detail. Further research should be carried out with this new construction of a feminist pentagon and see how people advance social change and gender equality policies from those corners, giving a better indication in the work of the creators of change.

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### ***Interviews***

- Anonymous respondent (21.11.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (22.11.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (07.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (08.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (11.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (12.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (13.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (15.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (18.12.2017a) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (18.12.2017b) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (19.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.
- Anonymous respondent (20.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.



Anonymous respondent (21.12.2017) personal interview in Iceland.

Anonymous respondent (17.01.2018) personal interview in Iceland.

Anonymous respondent (30.01.2018) personal interview in Iceland.

Anonymous respondent (01.03.2018a) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (01.03.2018b) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (01.03.2018c) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (08.03.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (15.03.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (26.03.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (28.03.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (03.04.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (04.04.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (05.04.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

Anonymous respondent (04.05.2018) personal interview in the Netherlands.

