Gender policy narratives in development organizations

A qualitative content analysis of development organizations’ approaches to gender equality in Bolivia, Cambodia, and Malawi

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Introduction

Today gender equality is an important part of development. It is an accepted priority through several international agreements such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and by international, national, and local women’s movements around the world. With the help of gender mainstreaming, the practise of including a gender sensitive approach in policies and institutions, the international agreements can be found in various forms within most development organizations both governmental and not (Eyben, 2010). Nevertheless, there is a longstanding debate about how effective gender mainstreaming has really been when addressing gender inequality. One part of that debate refers to how different meanings and solutions to gender equality can cause conflict between discourses present in policy narratives. A consequence of this can be failure to successfully implement gender equality initiatives within development countries (Mannell, 2014:455-456).

However, what different policy narratives framing gender equality are there to be found? In a study on the gender policies of development organizations in South Africa, J. Mannell (2014) identifies three narratives used by development actors to construct the problem of and solution to gender inequality. The narratives were identified as Gender equality as an instrument for economic growth, gender equality for women’s rights and empowerment, and gender equality for social transformation. In her results, she observes that the three policy narratives could be found in different development organizations depending on what level of society the organization operates on. This paper will attempt to identify Mannell’s three narratives through a discourse analysis of development organizations gender policies within three other development countries; Bolivia, Cambodia, and Malawi.

Research question

This study attempts to identify to what extent the three policy narratives can be found in organizations that operate on different societal levels in three development countries. The narrative will be found by analysing policy documents and mission statements from 13 development organizations within each country. The organizations are divided into four groups of sources that represent the international, national, and sub-national levels of society: The International non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations, foreign aid agencies representing the top donors, the national government, regional, national
and local non-governmental organization. The aim is to see where and how the narratives are found and if there are patterns that suggest that a narrative can be found within a certain group of organizations. To see of how big the problem of conflicting gender equality discourses that might be this study will look at if there really are major differences in approaches among development organizations to gender equality.

The research question is:

*What narratives framing approaches to gender equality can be found in development organizations that operate on the international, national, and subnational level of society?*

**Previous research**

This section will serve as an introduction to Mannell (2014)’s South African study and the three gender policy narratives.

**Conflicting policy narratives in South Africa**

This study make use of Jeneviève Mannell’s article “Conflicting policy narratives: Moving beyond culture in identifying barriers to gender policy in South Africa” from 2014. The purpose of her article is to “explore the barriers to the implementation of gender policy in international development” (pp. 455). She does this by analysing gender narratives found in the policies of the national government, international donors and international non-governmental organizations that are used in practice by local non-governmental organizations in South Africa. The main argument in her article is that cultural resistance to gender policies is not always the main barrier to a successful policy implementation. But in certain contexts, different policy narratives can have the consequence of creating conflicts between practitioners hindering collaboration and implementation (Mannell 2014:455). The study aims to contribute to the debate on failed gender policies by focusing on diverging discourses utilized by development actors.

Even though development actors have good intentions many empirical studies show failures in gender policy implementation in low and middle income countries, which are often attributed to cultural resistance and norms within the societies and the organizations (Mannell, 2014:455). Policy narratives can show us the discourses present in different strategies dealing with gender inequality. As well as show the meanings assigned to gender inequality and the
perceived solutions. Different discourse present in gender equality policies can cause conflict hindering gender initiatives when put into practice, in explicit ways like creating disagreement and making collective action difficult and implicit by creating unseen conflicting paradigms (Mannell 2014:456).

The gender policy narratives found in Mannell (2014)’s South African study are discussed with Nancy Fraser (1995)’s distinction of politics of redistribution and politics of recognition in feminist activism. These two types of politics of justice serve as a conceptual framework for a discussion of how different discourses define, use and try to solve gender inequality. Recognition means solving inequality by seeing women as a devalued group that needs recognition, and redistribution by erasing the group difference between men and women (Fraser, 1995). The recognition – redistribution dilemma show how gender equality policies can be often inherently opposed, however there is a way to combined them (Fraser 2007). The next section on the theoretical framework will go into Fraser’s theories further.

Mannell finds three distinct gender policy narratives within the South African development context: gender equality as an instrument for economic development, gender equality for women’s rights and empowerment, and gender equality as social transformations of everyday gendered power relations. In her result Mannell also observes that the three gender policy narratives that she identifies are often found in different organizations that differ in size, reach and societal level. In her analysis of the three narratives, she finds that in South Africa the instrumentalism narrative is often used by large bilateral donor organizations, the empowerment narrative by donor agencies and the national government, and the social transformation narrative by regional and local non-governmental organizations (Mannell 2014:459-464).

Instrumentalism: gender equality for economic development

The instrumentalist narrative view gender equality as an instrument for reaching economic development. The absence of women in the work force and in politics is perceived as a loss of economic potential. This is often exemplified in policy documents as how the economic potential of 50% of the population is not utilized. The problem of gender inequality is then that it hinders economic growth because women are not participating. This justifies solutions where women need education, political representation and work opportunities. Often by
gender inclusive measures in development practises like gender mainstreaming, and looking to the Millennium Development Goals (Mannell 2014:459-461). This narrative within the recognition/ redistribution perspective aims to redistribute development resources to erase the income gap by integrating women in education and the work force. A critique of this narrative is that it does not sufficiently address the social norms that maintain and create the injustices that women experiences (Mannell 2014:459-461).

Mannell (2014) writes that this narrative is often found in larger bilateral donor organization and agencies. However, one can argue that one might find similar structures and narratives within large international non-governmental organizations as well. Reasons for adopting this economic development narrative can be that it is often a major priority in a developing country to strengthen the economy, and it is comfortable to adopt a gender policy that follows that priority. Or one might argue that the effects of projects dealing with women’s education and work opportunities are easier to see than initiatives dealing with informal institutions.

**Women’s rights and empowerment**

The women’s rights and empowerment narrative focus on how women are unable to gain from development due to legal frameworks and discriminatory structures in society, or how they lack the power to access these frameworks. The problem here is that demands for women’s time to be placed on unpaid labour are hindering them from participating in political decision making. The empowerment and instrumental narratives are here compatible as they both address women’s inability gain from economic development and be part of politics, but they lead to different solutions. The women’s empowerment narrative is placed within politics of recognition as a solution, giving women as a group access to their rights and political power through legal frameworks. Often using “women’s rights are human rights” to construct women as a group with unique needs that need to be addressed (Mannell 2014:461-462).

Mannell (2014) gives examples of donor agencies and the national government as using this gender equality narrative. As the instrumentalist and empowerment narratives are compatible in their construction of the problem and consequences of gender inequality one might find them in similar organizations. On the other hand, one can argue that empowerment can focus on more context specific problems as for example laws and customs that are more interesting for regional or local development actors.
Gender as social transformation

Actors using this narrative want to transform gender power relations in everyday practices. The problem here is constructed as the social hierarchy that maintain gendered power relations between men and women. The solution is constructed as the need to change and challenge social norms and informal institutions that create gender inequality. Organizations working within this narrative often use participatory approaches collectively organizing women or interpersonal approaches. There are also organizations using this narrative to justify working with men and harmful masculinities especially within a context of gender-based violence. The social transformation narrative can put focus on how changing men’s behaviour will change patterns of gender inequality. This narrative is different than the other two as this narrative challenge the existing relationship between men and women, the root cause of gender inequality. Social transformation offers a combination of redistribution and recognition politics, by attempting to redistribute the labour of the workplace and the household, as well as recognizing women’s lower place in the social hierarchy (Mannell 2014:462-464).

For this narrative Mannell (2014) gives examples of local and multinational organizations that are working on the subnational level often using an interpersonal approach to address gender relations. This can explain why she found mostly local NGOs drawing from this narrative as it requires a lot of local knowledge for their projects to be successful (Mannell 2014:462-464). The social transformation narrative can be harder to find among larger organizations because of the challenge of changing existing informal institutions.

Theoretical framework

Politics of redistribution and recognition is an important theory to understand the basis and logic of the three gender policy narratives looked at in this paper and the next section will provide a further understanding of the theoretical framework that they operate in.

Redistribution and recognition

This section offers a closer explanation of Fraser’s recognition – redistribution dilemma and theoretical framework. Fraser (1995) writes about two analytical different paradigms of justice; redistribution and recognition. Politics of redistribution deals with socio-economic
injustice, originating in the political-economic structures of societies which include exploitation, deprivation, and economic marginalization. Politics of recognition deals with cultural or symbolic injustice that is rooted in the social practises of communication, representation, and interpretation. Examples of cultural injustice are non-recognition, disrespect in the form of stereotypes, and cultural domination. Both cultural and economic injustices are present in today’s societies, imbedded in processes that systematically discriminate and disadvantage some groups in contrast to others. The two injustices are interlinked in what becomes a loop of economic and cultural subordination. Biased cultural norms are institutionalized through discursive politics and in material conditions of the disadvantaged groups, that because of their economic conditions lose their ability to shape cultural norms (Fraser, 1995). Redistribution deals with economic injustice by transforming economic structures or redistribute the division of labour. On the other hand, recognition deals with cultural injustice with symbolic change, revaluating undervalued identities or the transformation of social representation (Fraser, 1995).

The distinction between them that is relevant in this study is how politics of redistribution and recognition handle group distinctions, specifically individuals that identify themselves as women as opposed to men. Politics of redistribution dealing with economic injustice often strive to eliminate “arrangements that underpin group specificity” (Fraser, 1995:15). Thus, promote integration of groups or to remove the gendered division of labour. Politics of recognition strive to call attention to and value group specificity. The aims of the two paradigms are contradictory and groups that need both are left with the recognition–redistribution dilemma (Fraser, 1995).

Fraser discusses gender and “race” as categories shaped by both socio-economic structures and cultural structures in society. Disadvantaged groups within gender and race experience injustice rooted in both “maldistribution” and “misrecognition”. Thus, they need both value as groups and group equality. Within the socio-economic sphere, gender structures the division of paid labour assigned to men and unpaid domestic labour assigned to women which lead to gender specific exploitation. If gender injustices were only set in political economic structures justice would mean no gender distinctions at all. However, gender is also rooted in cultural and symbolic status structures; androcentric norms privileging masculinity and cultural sexism devaluing things that are feminine. The feminist recognition–redistribution dilemma is then “how can feminists fight simultaneously to abolish gender differentiation and to valorise gender specificity?” (Fraser, 1995:22). Creating conflicting discourses dealing with
gender equality, that are made visible by the instrumentalist and empowerment gender policy narratives.

Fraser (2007) writes that feminist politics have shifted towards the recognition paradigm during the last thirty years. From being centred on labour divisions and violence to a focus on representation and identity. Instead of a paradigm that could address both recognition and redistribution it is an “uneven development”, feminist progress within recognition will mean a loss of progress within redistribution (Fraser, 2007:24-25). Fraser (2007) argues that there need to be a combination of the perspectives a two-dimensional approach to gender and justice. To address gender injustice efficiently one need to challenge both the economic structures and our social conception of the status of masculinity and femininity. A two-dimensional conception of justice “cantered on the principle of parity of participation” (Fraser, 2017:27). Means social arrangements in which all members on society interact as equals. To do this there are a need for distribution of resources to ensure some level of independence, and institutionalised patterns of equal cultural value being assigned to all participants (Ibid 2017:27). This two-dimensional conception of gender can be argued to inform the discourse present within the social transformation narrative.

**Methodology**

This part will introduce qualitative content analysis as the method used in this study and the relevant operationalization of the gender policy narratives studied. This will be followed by a discussion on case selection and the material included in the analysis as well as a section regarding validity and reliability.

**Qualitative content analysis**

Qualitative content analysis is one of many methods applied when analysing text sources. The method can be described as a systematic analysis of a text by focusing on the manifest content as well as the themes and core ideas as content (Drisko and Maschi, 2015:83). Studies using this method can focus on the characteristic of the language as a means of communicating the content and examine the context of the text source. The goal being to offer further knowledge and understanding of the subject or phenomenon studied (Hsiu-fang and Shannon 2005). Hsiu-fang and Shannon (2005) defines qualitative content analysis as:” a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification
process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p.1278). Validity and reliability are more emphasized than credibility and trustworthiness, which connects to a more “constructivist epistemology” and interpretive qualities as opposed to quantitative content analysis (Drisko and Maschi, 2015:86).

Hsiu-fang and Shannon (2005) describe three approaches to qualitative content analysis. The conventional approach in which categories are derived from the text, the summative approach where the counting keywords or comparing content frequency within texts, and the direct approach in which previous research and theoretical frame works guide the categories. The direct approach use a more structured process than what is used in the conventional approach. The direct approach can utilize already found previous research or theories so that one can identify “key concepts or variables as initial coding categories” (Hsiu-fang and Shannon 2005:1281). In this study, the direct qualitative content analysis is used as this approach can utilize the three gender policy narratives as categories that are central to this paper. Categories are themes and patterns that are explicitly found in the text or derived from them using analysis (Hsiu-fang and Shannon 2005). The narratives are used as categories that will be operationalized in the next section. The purpose is to see how the narratives manifests in the sources, in what kind of context the narratives can be found, and how often the texts are categorized as belonging to a certain narrative. Thus, not only count words but identifying themes and categorize texts into narratives by looking at both explicit and implicit manifestations of the gender equality policies.

Operationalization of the narratives
Mannell (2014)’s used interpretative policy analysis find the narratives underlining the policy documents taken from development organizations of different size and scope. Interpretive policy analysis study how policy problems are framed and understood. Using this approach, the texts are read and categorized with the help of three questions: 1. What is the ‘problem’ of gender and how is the ‘problem’ being defined in the case? 2. Who represents the target group or groups of the policy? 3. How should the ‘problem’ be addressed and what are the solutions to this ‘problem”? (Mannell 2014:459):
Instrumentalism:

- Problem of gender inequality: gender inequality leads to the loss of economic potential and is a hindrance for economic development.
- Target group of the policy narrative: women.
- Solution to the problem: the need for education, work opportunities, and political power to integrate women in the economy.

Women’s rights and empowerment:

- Problem of gender inequality: discriminatory social structures and legal frameworks hindering gender equality.
- Target group of the policy narrative: women.
- Solution to the problem: focusing on women’s needs and empowerment, giving women as a unique group access to their rights.

Gender as social transformation:

- Problem of gender inequality: existing gendered power relations creating social hierarchies.
- Target group of the policy narrative: women and/or men.
- Solution to the problem: challenge and change gendered power relations in everyday life.

Case studies

Mannell selected South Africa for her study because of the interest shown by international development organizations and donors after the end of the apartheid regime in 1994 and its democratization in 1996. The creation of this new democracy offered new opportunities for international agencies and marked a change in international intervention. This coincided with a shift in global gender policy in the 1990’s, from a focus of integrating women in development to a focus on how the agencies themselves needed to change. An active women’s movement and a new constitution committed to equality supported by international development agencies helped South Africa establish strong institutions focused on gender and gender policies in the 1990’s and early 2000’s (Mannell 2014:457). The presence and interest of numerous international development organizations, foreign donor agencies, local NGO’s
and women’s movements in South Africa have resulted in a large amount of gender inequality related programs. Therefore, Mannell argues that South Africa is interesting because of the presence of different actors with diverse strategies and practices which means different discourses and policy narratives (Mannell 2014:457).

This study uses Mannell’s result to evaluate the question to what extent different gender policy narratives can be found within development organizations, depending on the societal level of the organization. To do this, South Africa will be argued to be a country where diverging discourses are found among different kinds of development actors, while Bolivia, Cambodia, and Malawi will serve as countries with very different circumstances and development contexts. A country with a very different social, political, and economic context might have other patterns of gender policy narratives and implementation. The three countries chosen are strategically selected using South Africa as a point of compression using the Human Development Index (HDI) and the Gender Development Index (GDI).

The Human development index is a summary of the average performance of a nation in three development dimensions: health measured by life expectancy, education measured by mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling, and standard of living measured by gross national income (GNI) per capita. The index was created to include other criteria than economic growth when evaluating if a country is developed or not. The index can be helpful when comparing the policies of countries that have similar GNI per capita but perform differently in development (UNDP, 2016b). The GDI measures the difference between the HDI of men and the HDI of women; “the ratio of female to male HDI values” with 1 being no difference between the groups (UNDP, 2016b). Another interesting index included in the Human development report is the Gender inequality index (GII) that measures the percentage of potential development lost because of gender inequality, with 0 being no development lost. This index is assessing the gender-based disadvantages shown in three development dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation (UNDP, 2016c).

In 2016, South Africa had a score of 0.666 in the Human development index (HDI) and a rank of 119. With 0.962 in the Gender development index (GDI), and 0.394 in the Gender inequality index (GII) (UNDP, 2016a). This paper has an interest in studying countries categorized as having low or medium human development, are lower middle income
economies, and contexts comparably or less developed than South African. Thus, the three countries are cases of low to medium developed countries that fall under the average HDI score of their regions. Sub-Saharan Africa has an average HDI score of 0.523 compared to Malawi’s 0.476. South Asia’s average HDI score is 0.621 while Cambodia’s is at 0.563. Latin America has an average of 0.756 and Bolivia a score of 0.674 (UNDP, 2016b).

Bolivia

In 2016, Bolivia had a score of 0.674 in the HDI and a rank of 118. With 0.934 in the GDI, 0.446 in the GII, and 51.8% of the seats in the parliament were held by women (UNDP 2016a). The Plurinational state of Bolivia is a land locked country in the centre of South America with an economy largely depended on large natural resource exports. Despite that, Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in the region due to the unequal distribution of economic development within the country. It has rich oil fields in the east and south and a technologically underdeveloped mountain area in the west (Landguiden, 2016). Although women had their rights recognized since 1952, they remained marginalized in political processes until the democratization of the 1980’s. This was when women’s movements started to play an important role in the Bolivian politics. There are two main women’s movements that have influenced and continue to influence change: the indigenous women’s movement and the feminist movement (UNDP, 2014). Bolivia has a history of social divisions between the indigenous population and the creole elite that remains after the Spanish colonial period. However, in 2006 the country elected its first indigenous president who envisioned Bolivia as a multi-cultural nation with an indigenous identity (Landguiden, 2016). What makes Bolivia interesting to study is the large indigenous population, its Spanish colonial history, remaining social hierarchies, and the active indigenous and feminist women’s movements.

Cambodia

In 2016, Cambodia had a HDI score of 0.563 and a rank of 143. With a GDI score of 0.892, and 0.479 in the GII, with 19% of the seats in the parliament were held by women (UNDP 2016a). Cambodia is situated in South East Asia and has one of the fastest growing economies for a post-conflict country today. After an extended civil war, the nation had its first general election in 1993 and has since then signed several international conventions including CEDAW. Contributing to the economic growth is the restored peace, stable macroeconomic
conditions, and integrating neighbourhoods all of which have improved Cambodian’s HDI score (UNDP Cambodia, 2017). Despite the growing economy, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in the region with gender inequality issues related to poverty, violence, and discriminating social structures and norms (UNwomen Asia and the Pacific, N.D). Cambodia is interesting for study because of its resent economic growth, its low GDI score and its history of conflict.

Malawi

In 2016, Malawi had a HDI score of 0.476 and a rank of 170. With a GDI score of 0.921, and 0.614 in the GII, with 16.7% of the seats in the parliament were held by women (UNDP 2016a). Malawi is a small land locked country in southern Africa in which 85% of the population lives in rural areas. The country was ranked the 18th least developed country in 2013 (UNDP, 2017). After independence from British colonial rule in 1964, Malawi held its first democratic elections in 1994. Additionally, after the sudden death of the then president in 2012, the vice president Dr. Joyce Banda took over the post until 2014, becoming the second female president in Africa (Ibid, 2017). After the appointment of Dr. Joyce Banda as president the country saw an increase of women in high ranking positions and a Gender equality act was put in practice in 2013. Although some improvements to women’s empowerment have been made there’s still several major challenges remaining in the way of gender equality. Poverty, high rates of HIV, and gender based violence negatively impacts women’s lives (UN Women Africa, N.D). A factor making Malawi interesting to include in this study is the low economic development within the country worsening its development challenges, a factor that might serve as justification for the economic perspective taking priority in gender policy initiatives.

Material

The material included in this paper are policy documents and/or mission statements regarding gender equality from four different kinds of development policy sources:
1. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs).
2. Foreign aid agencies from donor countries.
3. The national government of Bolivia, Cambodia and Malawi.
4. Regional, national and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
These sources are relevant because they are organizations of different sizes that operate on the international, national and sub-national level of society. INGOs are organizations that work independently of states, have an international mission and operate in several countries around the world (Christensen, 2006:285). INGOs are important actors within international development and their activities make up a major part of the humanitarian assistance and aid given to developing countries today. As well as having a position of influence in policy processes (Morton, 2013). While INGOs work independently of states, IGOs are institutions made up of sovereign states or other IGOs. They are established with an agreement or a treaty deciding the purpose of the organization (UIA, 2017). Foreign aid agencies are in this study defined as the agency within a developed donor country that is responsible for that country’s development aid and related projects. The regional, national, and local NGOs used in this study are smaller non-governmental and non-profit organizations without the international mission of the INGOs and often with only one main development priority.

The INGOs selected all have a focus on either development issues in general with gender equality as a cross-cutting issue or are working with gender related questions specifically. The foreign aid agencies where chosen for their influence, as they represent the top donors present within each developing country. However, when gender equality was not a main priority in of itself, the agency’s cross-cutting gender mainstreaming policy within the agency was analysed instead. The regional, national, and local organizations analysed all have a focus on gender related questions as a priority within the organization, this was to narrow down the number of organizations relevant for the study. Furthermore, a possible problem with using local NGO’s is that this paper will only include those that have a working web page. This might lead to the exclusion of smaller organizations that would otherwise have been relevant to study. A list of the development organizations included in this paper is shown in the table below. The complete references to the organizations can be found in the appendix at the end of the document.
Table 1. List of development organizations in Bolivia, Cambodia, Malawi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developing country / category of organization</th>
<th>Bolivia</th>
<th>Colombia</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INGOs and IGOs (12)</td>
<td>Women-kind, Diakonia, PCI, IDB</td>
<td>ADB, IWDA, iDE, Care Cambodia</td>
<td>Action aid, UN Women, Oxfam, Concern worldwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid agencies (12)</td>
<td>SDC, BMZ, DANIDA, SIDA</td>
<td>JICA, KOICA, DFAT, French ministry of Europe and foreign affairs</td>
<td>US-aid, DFID, European commission, NORAD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government (3)</td>
<td>Ministry of justice et al.</td>
<td>Ministry of women’s affairs</td>
<td>Ministry of gender, children and social welfare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, national and, local NGOs (12)</td>
<td>CDIMA Aymara, Gregoria apaza, Colectivo Rebeldia, Coordinadora de la Mujer</td>
<td>GADC, WRC, CWCC, UPWD</td>
<td>Men engage alliance, JASS, Women for fair development, determined to develop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Validity and reliability

Validity is the absence of systemic mistakes and the reassurance that the operationalization of the concept the study is measuring is consistence with the theoretical version of the concept (Golafshani 2003:599). The validity of this study is safeguarded by the previous research on the narratives which are the concepts that have been operationalized and found in the empirical evidence. Furthermore, the validity is strengthened by the discussion of the narratives, the material used, and the analysis of the material to make clear the connection between theory, method, and the result to the reader throughout the paper.

Reliability on the other hand is the absence of unsystematic mistakes, and makes sure that the result of the study would be the same if it was made again by another author, that the study and result can be repeated (Golafshani 2003:598). This might be an issue due to the use of discourse analysis in which the author’s interpretation of the texts that make up analysis. As the study’s purpose is to categorize the texts according to that interpretation, an interpretation that could be subjective. However, the reliability is strengthened using structured and clear questions to identify the language belonging to the three narratives when reading the texts. The purpose is to contribute to the research and debate by discussing where and how these policy narratives might be present within development.
Analysis

The analysis is structured in a way so that each development country is first analysed by itself, followed by a result section summarising the general findings and patterns.

Bolivia

In Bolivia, 6 of 13 organizations used the empowerment narrative making this narrative the most recurring one. The instrumentalist could only be identified in two organizations, one INGO and one foreign aid agency. The social transformation narrative was found in all categories, but only once in all except for in two local NGOs. Larger organizations emphasized issues relating to poverty and inefficient legal frameworks and the fact that Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in South America. This is in contrast with smaller organizations that focus more on discrimination of the indigenous population particularly indigenous women and gender based violence.

Within the INGOs and IGOs category one organization, the Sweden based Diakonia has patterns of social transformation and the Inter-American Development Bank was categorized within the instrumentalist narrative. Two of four organizations belonged to the empowerment narrative; women-kind and PCI. Both organizations offer solutions related to ensuring women’s rights, economic and political empowerment but works through different approaches. PCI offers self-empowerment initiatives with community based activities for preventing gender based violence including savings-led and self-help groups to empower women economically and politically. Their initiatives work to change the community as well as women’s self-esteem (PCI, 2017). Women-kind emphasizes the discrimination faced by indigenous women, and their approach is to work closely with local NGOs and support women’s movements worldwide which offer a good example of the empowerment narrative within INGOs (Women-kind, 2015)

Together, with women’s rights organisations and movements, we are working towards…
1. Policies and laws that tackle discrimination and protect women.
2. Universal access to appropriate, quality services that protect and restore women’s rights.
3. Social change that supports the rights of all women and girls. (Women-kind, 2015)
The four foreign aid agencies analysed in Bolivia showed a variety of different narratives from instrumentalism in Denmark’s agency DANIDA to the social transformation narrative in Sweden’s SIDA. But although both the economic gains and the gender relations perspective were found in this category of organizations both Germany’s BMZ and Switzerland’s SDC were identified as using the empowerment narrative. They both emphasized how gender inequality cause discrimination towards women’s rights which can lead to gender based violence. With the solution to be a special focus on women as a vulnerable group and empowerment through political participation (BMZ, 2017; SDC, 2017).

The “Integral public policy for a dignified life of Bolivian women” is a policy document in the process of being implemented in several ministries within the Bolivian government. The policy works as a gender mainstreaming mechanism to counteract the underlying causes of violence against women. This document makes Bolivia stand out among the three developing countries included in this study as it is the only government policy identified within the social transformation narrative. For example, the Ministry of Communication is tasked with the goal of:

Raising awareness about the causes, forms and consequences of violence against women, as well as the breakdown of stereotypes, the patriarchal subordination and devaluation of women, and considering cultural diversity (Translated from Spanish, FAO, 2017).

And the Ministry of Education is tasked to:

Include in the educational curriculum at all levels the transversal gender focus, programs framed in the depatriarchalization process, aimed at influencing the elimination of behaviors, beliefs, habits and customs that imply conditions of discrimination and violence against women (Translated from Spanish, FAO, 2017).

The special focus on violence against women as the problem of gender inequality can factor in why the solution is identified as belonging to the social transformation narrative. Violence against women is often interpersonal, and attributed to norms and informal social structures. Despite how interesting this document is in this context it is worth mentioning that it was hard to find more general material from the Bolivian government website. It could
come down to a language barrier or just the absence of a clear document outlining a gender policy in addition to the Comprehensive public policy for a dignified life of Bolivian women.

Regional, national, and local organizations in Bolivia were identified as two being within the empowerment narrative and two within the social transformation narrative, with no organizations using the instrumentalist narrative. What sets Bolivia aside yet again is the local organizations describing themselves as feminist or explicitly point to how gendered power relations need to change. Gregoria apaza refers to a feminist dream for an inclusive Bolivia where men and women are equal in democracy, and the members of the network Colectivo Rebeldia describe the organization as a feminist movement that works towards changing the society and the country (Colectivo Rebeldia 2017; Gregoria apaza, N.D). Although both use the term feminist, only Colectivo Rebeldia is using the social transformation narrative. Colectivo Rebeldia introduces themselves and their mission as:

We are a group of critical and propositive rebels that recreate feminisms through sexual liberties, knowledge, dialogues with women and empowered organizations, transforming the society, the economy and the politics to live well (Colectivo Rebeldia 2017).

Table 2. Analysis of Bolivia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy narrative / organizations In Bolivia</th>
<th>Instrumentalism</th>
<th>Women’s rights and empowerment</th>
<th>Social transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INGOs and IGOs</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid agencies</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
<td>Present within the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, national and local NGOs</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cambodia

Cambodia is the development country with the most consistent pattern across all organizational categories, with the empowerment narrative identified within 11 out of 13 organizations. No organizations with the social transformation narrative were found and the instrumentalism narrative could only be identified in two larger organizations. In the INGO and IGO category only the Asian development bank used reasoning consistent with the instrumentalist narrative referencing the economic loss that comes from gender inequality;

ADB recognizes that without capturing and unleashing the talents, human capital, and economic potential of half the region’s population—women and girls—the goal of a region free of poverty will not be realized” (ADB, 2017).

The other three organization emphasized discrimination of women’s rights, unequal opportunities in life due to social structures, and empowering women as a unique group. An example of this is iDE’s working with strengthening women’s position in the “rural value chain” so that they can gain access to economic resources, knowledge, and technology. As well as increasing self-confidence and women’s standing in the community (iDE, 2017).

The pattern shown among INGOs and IGOs is also found among the foreign aid agencies representing the top donors to Cambodia. Only one belonged to the instrumentalist narrative and three to the empowerment narrative. Japan’s international cooperation agency’s solution to gender inequality amounts improving inclusive development, but as they define economic growth as development it becomes an instrumentalist approach. For example:

Creating an environment in which women, accounting for about half the population, can fully exercise their ability, will contribute to the improvement of productivity and vitalization of overall society, and can be expected to become a big growth engine (JICA, 2014).

The French, Korean, and Australian agencies on the other hand all view the problem of gender inequality as discriminating structures created by societies which can lead to gender based violence, lack of access to women’s rights and political representation. The solutions are similar to the INGOs using the empowerment narrative; gender mainstreaming, female leadership, and economic development to ensure empowerment (Ministry of Europe and
foreign affairs, 2013; DFAT, N.D; KOICA, N.D). In Mannell (2014)’s study France was categorized as using the instrumentalism narrative. In this study however, France is identified as using the empowerment narrative due to a policy change made in 2013, which was after Mannell finished her research on South Africa. (Ministry of Europe and foreign affairs, 2013; Mannell, 2014:460). Thus, the French ministry of Europe and foreign affairs defined the problem of gender inequality in 2010 as:

> All economic and development policies impact gender equality either by reducing, maintaining or worsening disparities between men and women. When a country sustains a socio-economic environment that encourages gender inequality, it condemns itself to failure, as 50% of its vital forces are brushed aside (Ministère des affaires étrangères et européennes, 2010:2; Mannell, 2014:460).

This can be compared with the French approach to gender equality outlined in the Gender and Development Strategy 2013 – 2017 from the Ministry of Europe and foreign affairs:

> This can be compared with the French document from 2013 analysed in this paper Respect for women’s rights, gender equality and the rejection of all forms of discrimination are key principals of the human declaration of human rights. These principles form a cornerstone of French foreign policy and development policy. The human rights based approach is also a powerful drive for development. (Ministry of Europe and foreign affairs, 2013:18).

Cambodia’s ministry of women’s affairs is an example for the empowerment narrative within a governmental context focused on gender mainstreaming. The vison statement of the ministry of women’s affairs brings up women’s right, empowerment as a group, and but also empowerment for equality between men and women:

> Cambodian women and men have equal rights, with women and girls enjoying personal and physical safety, participating fully in the whole spectrum of public life and decision-making equally to men and boys, and are economically empowered to guarantee their self-reliance and the well-being of children and families (MoWA, 2014:14).
The solution then is constructed as the need for effective gender mainstreaming to address barriers to women’s participation in politics and the economy, changing attitudes towards girls’ education, child protection and gender based violence. The document’s strategic plan is to strengthen the institution and capacity development concerning gender equality with gender mainstreaming, and women’s political and economic empowerment (MoWA, 2014). There is a large focus on human rights and women’s rights among the local organizations in Cambodia. But there are very few mentions of feminism or the need to explicitly change power relations and social hierarchies, which can explain why there are no organizations identified as having the social transformation narrative. The Cambodian Women’s crisis centre is a local NGO that has an initiative against gender based violence by educating men about the consequences of their behaviour.

CWCC’s Anger Management for Men program is part of a long-term, holistic strategy for bringing down the alarming levels of domestic violence in Cambodia as men are the aggressors in most cases. (CWCC, N.D).

However, the main focus of the NGO is to protect women against violence by drop-in crisis centres offering legal advice, strengthening the authority of community leaders, and educating girls which are aspects consistent with the empowerment and women’s rights narrative. They also advocate for the promotion of legal and policy reform (CWCC, N.D).

Table 3. Analysis of Cambodia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy narrative / organizations In Cambodia</th>
<th>Instrumentalism</th>
<th>Women’s rights and empowerment</th>
<th>Social transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INGOs and IGOs</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 3 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid agencies</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 3 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
<td>Present within the government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, national and local NGOs</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
<td>Present in 4 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Malawi

Like the previous two countries, the empowerment narrative is the most common narrative in Malawi, found in 6 out of 13 organizations. But unlike Bolivia and Cambodia, the instrumentalist narrative was found in the same amount of INGOs and IGOs, and foreign aid agencies as the empowerment narrative in Malawi. Furthermore, this was the only country in which the social transformation narrative was only found in regional, national, and local NGOs. All the INGOs and IGO introduce Malawi as one of the world poorest countries and position poverty as a priority. Poverty, HIV, and violence are all perceived as major problems often with solutions connected to health care, education and political representation. Both Oxfam and Concern worldwide that are large INGOs described gender equality in terms connecting them to the instrumentalist narrative both constructing gender equality as means to reach economic development (Oxfam, 2017; Concern Worldwide, 2014).

We work to advance women’s wellbeing and increase the benefits of the contributions that women and girls can make to societies and economies. The untapped contribution of women is a priority that we are working to correct by supporting organizations that focus on gender equality, legal reform, and ending violence against women. (Oxfam, 2017)

Gender inequality, and the role of women, is now recognised as a key driver of poverty globally and within Malawi. Women’s empowerment has an important role to play in all areas of Concern’s work in Malawi, but especially within our work in health and education. Girls are particularly important in breaking the cycle of poverty; girls’ education is strongly linked to improvements in health and income inequality (Concern Worldwide, 2014).

Out of the top 4 foreign aid agencies in Malawi, 2 were identified as using the instrumentalist narrative. The Department for International Development from the UK construct the problem of gender equality as structures that inhibit the potential of women and cause poverty; “DFID’s Strategic Vision for Girls and Women aims to unlock the potential of girls and women, to stop poverty before it starts”. To realise their aim the agency focus on education, work opportunities, reproductive health and preventing violence in inclusive economies and societies (DFID, 2013). The two aid agencies classified as using the empowerment narrative
had an overall focus on human rights, although economic development also held some priority. The European commission construct the problem of gender inequality as women being systematically discriminated against and their rights violated, and emphasize that women’s empowerment and gender equality are fundamental human rights and essential for sustainable development (European commission, 2017).

Older policy documents from Malawi’s government show patterns of instrumentalism. However, the current policy can be read as using the empowerment narrative, showing how the policy can change. The joint sector strategic plan by the Ministry of gender, children and social welfare and the Ministry of youth and sports focus on addressing discriminating structures against women and vulnerable groups, but also currently ineffective legal frameworks. The joint sector strategic plan also recognizes that there are groups of men that are included in the most vulnerable groups (Gender, children, youth, and sports SWG, 2013).

The mission of the sector is to provide an enabling environment for protecting and empowering children, youth, women and men through the formulation and implementation of relevant laws, policies, guidelines and programmes for sustainable development (Gender, children, youth, and sports SWG, 2013:25).

The three organizations within the social transformation narrative working in the local Malawian context all attribute the problem of gender inequality in different ways to gendered power relations. The regional organization JASS is working with feminist movement building and feminist popular education to address implicit power structures. To mobilize women collectively to demand their rights, address their needs related to HIV and promote democracy in communities (JASS, N.D). Similarly, the local NGO Women for fair development present the problem of gender inequality as hieratical power relations between men and women that disadvantage women living with HIV and poverty. As well as effecting their psychological wellbeing. Men for Gender Equality (MEGEN) is a national network in Malawi and part of Men engage Alliance in Africa. MEGEN works with individual men and through courses to prevent gender based violence, spread information about HIV, and create awareness of unequal power relations between men and women (MEGEN, N.D).

In addition to enhancing women’s participation in the public and political spheres, MEGEN also seeks to rectify “men’s negative use of power” and the detrimental
impact it can have on relationships. In an attempt to create a sense of “responsibility” and “equality in their minds”. (MEGEN, N.D).

Social transformation in Malawi is most often used by organizations established within the local context and not from the outside in. Determined to develop is a US registered NGO working in Malawi that was the only national organizations categorized as working within the empowerment narrative (Determined to develop, 2017).

Table 4. Analysis of Malawi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy narrative / type of organization in Malawi</th>
<th>Instrumentalism</th>
<th>Women’s rights and empowerment</th>
<th>Social transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INGOs and IGOs</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid agencies</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 2 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
<td>Present within the government</td>
<td>Not Present within the government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, national and local NGOs</td>
<td>Not Present within the organizations</td>
<td>Present in 1 out of 4 organizations</td>
<td>Present in 3 out of 4 organizations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result

Out of the three gender policy narratives used in this study the women’s rights and empowerment narrative was found in the most number of organizations. The empowerment narrative was present in 23 out of 39 development organizations analysed. The Social transformation narrative was found at least once in the INGOs and IGOs, foreign aid agencies, and the national governments analysed, and 5 times within the regional, national and local NGOs in the three countries. Thus, the narrative was present 8 times out of 39. The instrumentalism narrative was also present 8 times out of 39, although not with the same spread over organizational categories. The instrumentalism narrative could be identified within 4 INGOs and IGOs, and 4 foreign aid agencies.
The women’s rights and empowerment was the most used narrative on all levels of society; INGOs and IGOs, foreign aid agencies, governments, and regional, national and local NGOs. Meaning that although the instrumentalist narrative could only be found on the international level of society and the social transformation narrative was concentrated in the local context, those patterns of approaches can be argued to be overshadowed by the presence of the empowerment narrative.

Table 5. Analysis of all cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy narrative / type of organization</th>
<th>Instrumentalism</th>
<th>Women’s rights and empowerment</th>
<th>Social transformation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In all cases (39)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGOs and IGOs (12)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign aid agencies (12)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government (3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, national and local NGOs (12)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concluding Discussion

The question asked in the introduction was: What narratives framing approaches to gender equality can be found in development organizations that operate on the international, national, and subnational level of society? And concluding from the result there are patterns of where the three gender policy narratives can be found. Instrumentalism is only found among international actors and foreign aid donors, and the social transformation narrative is almost exclusively found in the subnational context among regional, national, and local NGOs. But the most visible result is that the empowerment narrative is overwhelmingly the most common among all organizational types and society levels today. While women’s rights and women’s empowerment are shown to be prioritized on all levels of society, the absence of instrumentalism on the local level and the weak presence of social transformation narratives on the international level of society could be interesting to study further. Although it is worth
noting that the INGO and Foreign aid agency identified as using the social transformations narrative are both based in Sweden; SIDA and Diakonia.

Another question not included in this study is what the consequences of different policy narratives in different development organizations on levels of society might be and why. With conclusion that there are some patterns but the empowerment narrative is the most used one can however draw parallels to Fraser (2007)’s argument that feminist politics have turned towards politics of recognition in the last years. A resent increase in the use of women’s rights and empowerment narrative is shown in the analysis of for example Malawi’s government and the French development agency. Both of which recently went from an instrumentalist approach to an empowerment view of gender equality. The general patterns for where the narratives were found could be observed in all case studies, there were also clear regional differences. For example, NGOs that describe themselves as feminist was concentrated in South American Bolivia. The NGOs in Asian Cambodia often had a focus on human rights and women’s rights. And in African Malawi larger INGOs priority was often poverty reduction while smaller NGOs focused on issues related to gender based violence and health care. This might point to some possibility of generalization of the result, as the INGOs, IGOs, and foreign aid agencies are all international actors, they most likely have similar approaches to gender equality in all places they work. The differences are instead found within the regional, national, and local NGOs.

Mannell’s article focuses on the presence of diverging policy narratives as the problem of gender policy implementation. However, in my study that the empowerment and women’s rights narrative is the most used narrative in all kinds of development organizations. My result indicates that there might be less conflict between discourses underlining gender policy narratives today compared to Mannell’s South African study, at least within Bolivia, Cambodia, and Malawi.
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Appendix

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Bolivia


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