



Men, Masculinity and #MeToo

Nordic experiences of the movement that shattered the culture of silence



About Men, Masculinity and #MeToo

This study has been produced by the Swedish organization MÄN. It is primarily based on presentations and discussions at a network meeting organised in Stockholm, in May 2018, together with other Nordic civil society organizations committed to ending men's violence. Interviews were conducted with representatives from organizations participating in the meeting.

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About MÄN

MÄN is a non-profit, feminist organization founded in 1993 as a platform for men to take action against men's violence towards women. We work to change destructive masculinity norms and reduce male violence. Our vision is an equal world free from violence.

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United for equality!

About Men, Masculinity and #MeToo



This report explores how #MeToo was received in the Nordic countries, with a specific focus on reactions and responses from men. Looking at Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Iceland, the report aims at describing some of the trends and challenges identified by organizations committed to ending gender based violence through diverse forms of work with men and masculinities.

The link between masculinity and men's violence

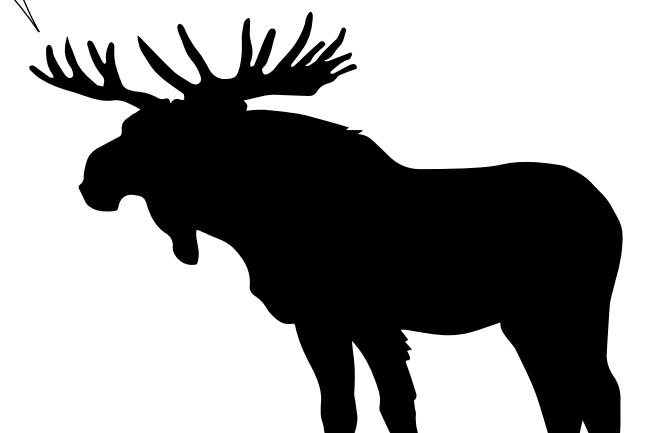
In May 2018, 30 representatives from organizations working to challenge masculinity norms in the Nordic countries met to build a foundation for mutual learning and cooperation. The content of this report is an account of discussions and experiences highlighted at the meeting, and partly based on interviews with some of the participants.

These Nordic organizations share the understanding that destructive masculinity norms are intimately linked to the perpetration of sexual violence, and to combat sexual abuse, we need to challenge and transform masculinity norms. To do that, there is a need to understand how they are created and upheld, and how they affect society, relationships and individuals. Changing destructive ideas of what it is to be a man has the potential to contribute to gender equality, improved public health and freedom from violence for all.

The following pages will depict how the #MeToo movement was received in the different Nordic countries, how men reacted to it, and what conclusions can be drawn in terms of connecting masculinity and men's responsibility and accountability to the issue of men's violence against women. •

A Nordic network to engage men

The Nordic MenEngage network brings together Nordic actors in the field of engaging men for gender equality. It is part of the MenEngage Alliance, a global network of close to 700 organizations worldwide, committed to ending men's violence against women by working on issues of men and masculinity. An important task of the members of the Nordic MenEngage network is to challenge patriarchal power structures and what it means to be a man. Another central element is the discussion on how to encourage men and boys to get involved in these issues.



Men's sexual violence against women

Men's violence against women, particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence, is a major global problem and a violation of women's human rights. Global estimates published by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicate that about one in three women (35%) worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime.¹

” Violence can be prevented. This is not an article of faith, but a statement based on evidence.

– World Health Organization ⁵

Who is the perpetrator?

The stereotypical image of perpetrators as monsters hiding in bushes, and attacking women while on their evening run in the park, is pretty far from the truth. The most common perpetrator of sexual violence is someone the victim already knows, be it acquaintances, relatives, colleagues, bosses or current or former intimate partners. This also became evident in the many stories shared under #MeToo.

Also, while not every man is a perpetrator – virtually all perpetrators are men. Men are highly over-represented as perpetrators of all forms of violence – be it by other men, children or women. In the case of Sweden, national statistics from 2014 showed that 98 percent of the 2 400 sexual assault suspects that year, were men.²

#MeToo also bluntly exposed the prevalence of male violence and sense of entitlement in all spheres of society, regardless of class, ethnicity, level of education, or professional sector. In other words; perpetrators of sexual harassment and violence can be found everywhere.

Numerous studies have shown that stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity increases the likelihood of perpetrating violence against women.³⁴ It also makes it more likely to consider violence against women in its different forms as less problematic. Actors within the field of engaging men for gender equality share the conviction that no man is born violent, and that violence can be prevented.

Men's violence is a men's issue

Throughout history, women have been at the forefront of the struggle to end men's violence. Women have also struggled to hold men accountable to the violence they commit or condone. However, men have been largely absent in the debate, activism and practical work against violence, and they have often met women's efforts with indifference, or even hostility.

Within the field of engaging men there are ongoing initiatives to challenge destructive masculinity norms and promote gender equality. Work is carried out to encourage men to take responsibility for their own actions, and to take a stand against violence committed by other men. The silence of men in relation to other men's sexualization of women, harassment and violence, creates a sense of acceptance and normalization of violent behaviour. In this sense, the responsibility to end men's violence against women lies truly on all men. •

#MeToo

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In 2006, the American civil rights activist Tarana Burke started a social media campaign on MySpace, primarily for young women of colour in poor regions. A young girl told Burke of her experiences of sexual abuse. She shared similar experiences, and was thinking “me too”. Burke initiated the #MeToo movement, using the hashtag to raise awareness of the pervasiveness of sexual violence. In 2017, the campaign went viral internationally when actress Alyssa Milano invited all women who were survivors of sexual violence to reply to a tweet she made with those, nowadays, very well-known words.

” Me too.

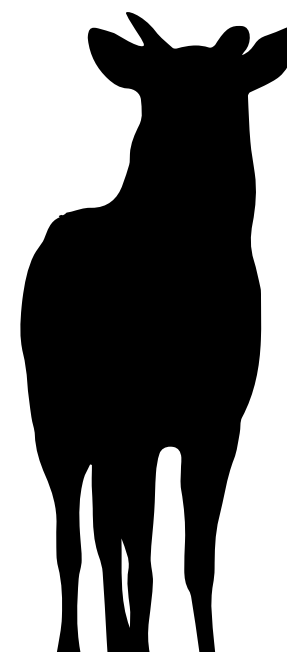
The culture of silence

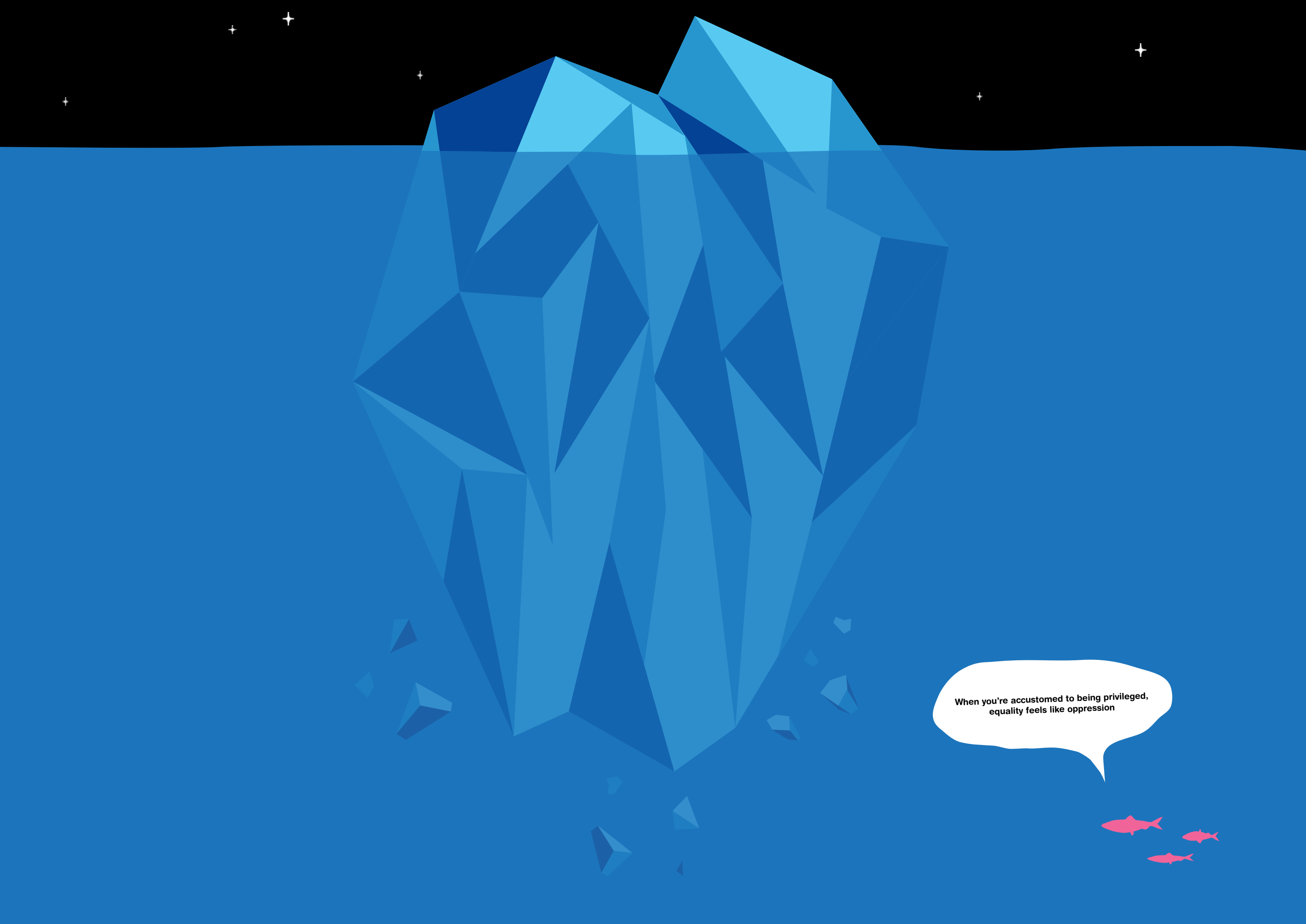
In the Nordic region, petitions from women in all professional spheres, signatures from hundreds of thousands of women, and stories shared on social media, constituted an unprecedented movement that challenged the culture of silence surrounding men’s violence against women. The personal testimonies of men’s sexualized violence and harassment of women were so many, and so strong, that they were impossible to ignore. #MeToo unveiled the magnitude of the problem, to the surprise of most men.

A platform for safe sharing

The fact that sexual violence has been an omnipresent threat to women’s sexual well-being, physical and mental health all over the world for centuries, is old news to most women. In addition to the impact of the sexual violence itself, many survivors are faced with negative social responses when they share their experiences with others. This amounts to a form of secondary victimization, and differs from responses toward victims of other forms of violent crime.⁶

#MeToo was a virtual revolution in the way that it gave women with experiences of sexual harassment and violence an opportunity to tell their stories without the risk of being judged or shamed. All actors involved in taking care of the effects of men’s violence against women were well aware of the magnitude of the problem that #MeToo highlighted. However, it is an undeniable fact that #MeToo has contributed heavily to a shift in the public awareness and debate on sexualized violence in many parts of the world, including the Nordic countries. •





When you're accustomed to being privileged,
equality feels like oppression

The Nordic context

I

Many believe the Nordic countries to be gender equality heaven. This is also how the region commonly perceives itself. While only partly true, the Nordic countries do have an impressive record when it comes to progress in the field of gender equality. Issues regarding men and masculinity are also increasingly being brought into the gender equality agenda. The policy area of men and gender equality is given high priority in the Nordic countries, and a number of measures are implemented accordingly, focusing on, among other things, prevention of men's violence, equal parenthood and transformation of gender roles.⁷

The Nordic context

The Nordics – a relatively good place to live as a woman

All of the Nordic countries; Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, are in the top ten Western European countries for gender equality, according to the World Economic Forum's annual Global Gender Gap Report. When it comes to education level, pay gap, child and maternal mortality rates, economic independence, and access to power, the Nordic countries are a relatively good place to live as a woman. The broad women's movement has played a crucial role in this progress. Yet, gender inequality and violence against women persist.

” Women have had to deal with men's violent behaviour for centuries, not only as victims, but also in the struggle to end it. Therefore, it's not only necessary, but rather fundamental, that all men take responsibility for men's violence.

– Alán Ali, president, MÄN

Men's relationship with gender equality

Nordic gender equality reforms have historically been aimed at making the unfair distribution of power and resources between men and women even, and most initiatives have targeted women. However, the work of women's movements, and the growing field of critical masculinity studies, also paved way for an increased focus on men and their relation to gender equality. To varying degree in the different Nordic countries, the ambition has been to make gender equality an issue of stronger concern to men than it has been in the past. •

The Nordic stories of #MeToo

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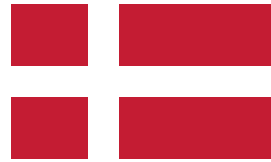
Given the history of gender equality work in the Nordic countries: how did #MeToo impact Denmark, Iceland, Finland, Sweden, and Denmark? How did men react to women's testimonies? Were there constructive responses? What did the resistance look like? What differences and similarities can we detect?

” Men need to enter the fire and take the heat that women historically have been exposed to from engaging in the feminist movement.

– Hanna Nordberg, Unizon



Denmark



“Don’t accuse men!” This was one of the common, negative responses to #MeToo in Denmark. The public debate was very vivid, though, and everyone had an opinion. The consciousness about sexual harassment increased significantly, but there wasn’t a collective movement that engaged a lot of people. There was some progress in the discussion on the need to challenge the power balance in society, but not much was seen of the critical discussion on destructive masculinity norms, that took place in other parts of the region.

– A common reaction was that men felt accused. They stole the spotlight from the brave women who testified and told their stories, says Henriette Højberg, Head of Secretariat at an organization that challenges attitudes towards gender; DareGender.

A lot of the public debate circled around the famous men who aggressively responded to the accusations against them. Filmmaker Peter Aalbæk Jensen became Denmark’s Harvey Weinstein. Aalbæk Jensen is close associate and friend with Lars Von Trier, another very famous filmmaker. Aalbæk Jensen calls himself “the Pig”, and has repeatedly, and publicly, stated that he loves to fondle women. And that he won’t stop.

– Peter Aalbæk Jensen made some horrible statements in the media, and it has been well known that he’s been sexually harassing people, Henriette states.

One trait in the discussion on gender equality in Denmark is the criticisms of how gender equality has gone too far in neighbouring countries, and some Danes think that Swedes are living in a “feminist dictatorship”.

– Aalbæk Jensen once said in an interview that “within five years, a Swedish man will have fired a machine gun into a crowd of women”. He later stated that it can hardly end in any other way, Henriette says.

She explains that the reason for this is that men are feeling subdued by women and don’t dare to speak openly about it. She understands this notion, though, and doesn’t disagree. Henriette believes men could become very hostile towards women if their anger is not addressed.

But these famed men, taking pride in sexually harassing women is, fortunately, not the only kind of response to #MeToo in Denmark.

– I saw that a new group of people talked about women’s rights in a new way and that the issue was debated in the work field as well, says Mie Møller Nielsen, Head of Secretariat at Men’s Health Society.

– For example, the union for Danish metal workers has mostly male members, and #MeToo had a considerable effect on the way they deal with sexual harassment in the workplace. The Danish metal union also started a discussion about how you can use your power; both positively and negatively.

Men’s Health Society is a multidisciplinary non-governmental organization founded in 2014 dedicated to all aspects of men’s health.

Mie also says that even though some people said #MeToo was overrated, and that everyone should relax and get over it, most reactions were positive.

– Some groups of men believed it to be a good thing, and some actually started to question their own behaviour.

Engaging men

The progressive work brought on by #MeToo focused on the issue of men’s power in society. It was more about how to make it easier for women to speak up, rather than a discussion on how to prevent men from perpetrating acts of harassment and violence. Henriette did not see any other organizations that specifically highlighted issues of men and masculinity. DareGender organized six “Man Talk” sessions where they invited politicians to participate. Unfortunately, only three politicians participated, due to lack of time.

– It was a clear message that this is not something that is politically prioritized, says Henriette.

However, a legal case about a digital sexual assault had fuelled the debate on sexual harassment and violence, even before #MeToo happened.

– It is an extensive case called the “Umbrella case”. About 1300 young people have been charged for spreading non-consensual material online, and are going to trial. There were some initiatives already working on digital harassment too.

The Umbrella case got some welcomed headwind during #MeToo and opened the space up for further discussion. Henriette continues:

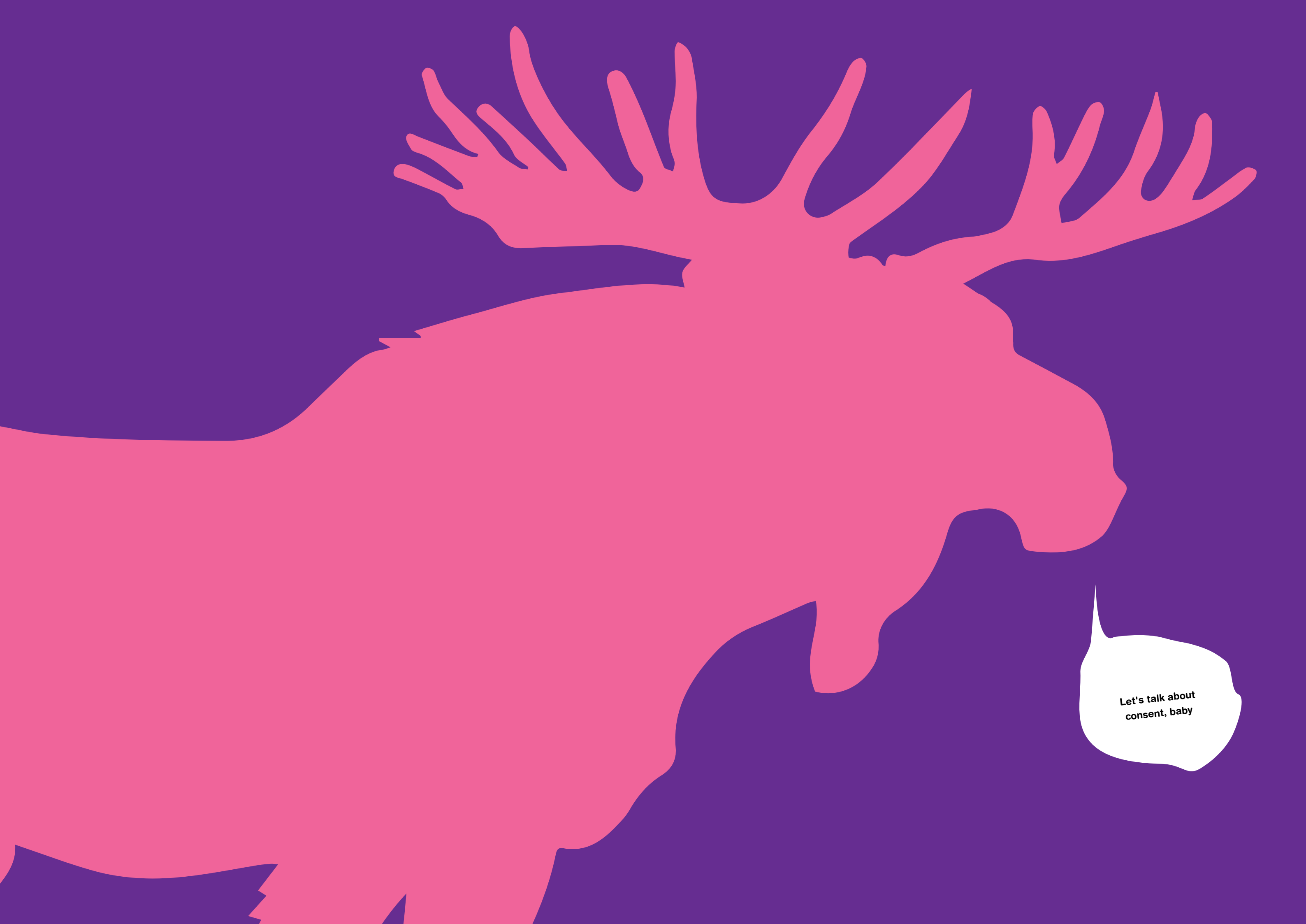
– Some men started to discuss masculinity norms, and they asked themselves: what is my accountability in all of this?

DareGender is a member organization that reaches out to all types of men, regardless of professions and political views.

– We think that everyone has an interest in gender equality work, no matter your background or theoretical knowledge.

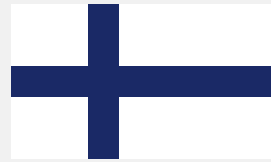
The organization is specifically targeting men’s issues to introduce members to other perspectives on masculinity as well as well refined methods of violence prevention.

– The main reason that we need to engage men is that equality applies to all genders. We have to work on the premise that men are also a gender. If we want to have a more equal society, men need to be a part of that change – not just allies, Henriette concludes. •



Let's talk about
consent, baby

Finland



– The general discussion in media was a little bit off topic, from time to time. The focus was put on the crimes and misconduct of a few individuals rather than on the deeper issues of gender norms or imbalanced power structures. Some men asked themselves: “Are we not allowed to flirt anymore?”

These are the words of Kimmo Saastamoinen and Kalle Laanterä at Poikien Talo (Boy's House), an institution that does gender-sensitive social youth work. They witnessed as the Swedish speaking community in Finland made #MeToo spread to other institutions and communities such as schools, theatre, film and other parts of the culture sector.

– The Swedish speaking community in Finland started a campaign and safe space where over 6 000 women shared their experiences of sexual harassment, says Kimmo and Kalle.

And there were some fields of working life that reacted quite well. The Finnish Ministry of Education published a guide on how to prevent sexual harassment in schools.

– Shortly after #MeToo happened, the debate focused on the legal case surrounding Aku Louhimies, a well-known Finnish film director. Louhimies has been accused of using brutal and humiliating methods in his film productions. The general perception was that women were particularly targeted with these methods even though men had reported similar kind of experiences. Critical voices claimed that women blaming Louhimies had ruined his movies, says Harry Lunabba, Senior Lecturer at the University of Helsinki.

In general, Finns acknowledge that sexual violence is a problem but Harry, Kimmo and Kalle witnessed

a common resistance to the #MeToo movement: that it had gone too far.

– The most harmful resistance could be described as “the silent resistance”. The fact that #MeToo is not acknowledged by leading political parties who are currently governing Finland. The responsibility to move the discussion forward falls mainly on the shoulders of individuals who are brave enough to share their experiences. A lot of work needs to be done in the effort to engage politics, as well as other institutions, to examine gendered structures and practices. Finland is not there yet, but I strongly believe that we will eventually evolve, Harry concludes.

Men and their responses

Harry Lunabba believes that there was a wide variety of reactions to the #MeToo revolution by Finnish men. Some felt ashamed and responsible; others might have had a sense of relief that destructive forms of masculinity were finally being confronted.

– There are also men who do not recognize the link between gendered violence, sexual harassment and current social structures. There are men who are afraid of, and concerned with, the movement for various reasons. Some are perhaps worried that stories from their past will be revealed. Others are more generally concerned about how they themselves, or men in gen-

eral, might be portrayed in the current #MeToo debate, says Harry.

Even though some men used the “not all men” and “men too” arguments, Kimmo and Kalle think that a lot of men finally understood that sexual harassment and perpetration of violence towards women is a persistent problem.

– I guess men really need a safe space to talk about this, Kimmo and Kalle conclude.

Many of the young men that come to Poikien Talo are in vulnerable situations and have faced social problems, like bullying or loneliness, in their lives. Poikien Talo also does sexual

health work including sexual counselling and support for boys and young men that have faced sexual violence.

They frequently talk with boys about sexuality, gender roles, expectations, norms and masculinity.

– We believe working with boys and young men is really at the core of preventing violence. Masculinity norms are far too often negative and violent. Boys and young men don't have many positive male figures in their lives. Therefore, it is crucial for us men to promote positive masculinity and keep having a dialogue with boys and young men about feelings, gender roles, equality,

” It is crucial for us men to promote positive masculinity, and keep having a dialogue with boys and young men about feelings, gender roles, equality, and respecting your own and other's boundaries.

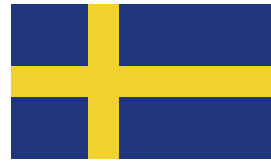
– Kimmo Saastamoinen and Kalle Laanterä, Poikien Talo

and respecting your own and others boundaries, says Kimmo and Kalle.

Harry Lunabba believes men have their own responsibilities, interests, and needs when it comes to gender equality work.

– Right now I think that many men have difficulties positioning themselves in the gender equality debate. Men are often portrayed as either perpetrators or bystanders, but there are many other dimensions to consider. I think it is crucial to recognize men and masculinities as social agents in all work concerning gender equality, he says. •

Sweden



How was the response from Swedish men?

Despite the overall positive response, the same kind of resistance as we have seen elsewhere also showed in Sweden. There were some voices that called #MeToo a witch hunt on men, and others made the argument that sexual harassment and violence was the result of increased immigration, despite statistics and numerous testimonies pointing in another direction.

“We needed to act fast to guide men in how to be an ally in the movement, and create safe spaces where men could discuss amongst themselves.

**– Hanna Navier,
Communications Manager, MÄN**

Many men supported #MeToo and made attempts to respond to the stories of abuse and assault through various hashtags and confessions of perpetrating abuse. These responses were shared widely and got praise as well as a lot of criticism, mainly because they were perceived to draw attention from women's testimonies. Women's rights activists also highlighted the risk of glorifying men's regretful confessions without reaching justice and reparation.

According to Henrik Westin, psychologist and educator at MÄN, men

felt insecure about how to respond, but he still thinks the response was positive.

– The responses showed that us men as a group started to ask ourselves: “How might we have contributed to the suffering that #MeToo unveils?” In order to understand this, we have to talk about masculinity norms, he says.

The organization MÄN has been working to engage men for gender equality for many years. They tripled their number of members after #MeToo.

– For us, #MeToo was revolutionary. We needed to act fast to guide men in how to be an ally in the movement and create safe spaces where men could discuss amongst themselves. Almost overnight, men's violence became an undeniable societal problem worth getting involved in preventing, says Hanna Navier, Communications Manager at MÄN.

MÄN is a non-profit, feminist organization founded in 1993 as a platform for men to take action against men's violence towards women. The organization focuses on masculinity norms, how these norms are created and how they affect society, relationships and individuals.

During the fall of 2017, MÄN developed a guide for #AfterMeToo discussion groups.

– Men already speak in groups where women are shut out; in boardrooms, in break rooms, in sports locker rooms and many other contexts. With the #AfterMeToo material, we would like to spark different kinds of discussions than the ones that generally take place, Henrik explains.

The initiative quickly spread across Sweden. During spring 2018, more than 30 groups started around the country; and many more are expected in the years ahead.

According to Hanna, the commitment seems to be lasting:

– One year after #MeToo, many of the men that came to us are still active in the organization. This is a growing and revitalizing movement. •

It took just a handful of days for #MeToo to set all of Sweden in motion. In the following months, petitions from women in virtually all industries, and tens of thousands of testimonies on social media, created a movement of unprecedented strength. The response was overall positive and quite a few men engaged in conversations about vulnerability, masculinity and equality. Within the same timeframe, a new sexual assault legislation got passed. However, many men also reacted with disbelief and anger, while others blamed the sexual abuse of women on newcomers, in an already infected debate on immigration.

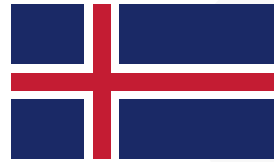
The great number of manifestos, where thousands of women from various industries left anonymous testimonies, generated a massive media storm. These manifestos were quickly assembled and organized thanks to efficient collaboration by women from different professions, who shared their expertise to help each other. In private Facebook groups, hundreds of thousands of stories were shared, and numerous women dared, for the first time, to speak out about abuse and harassment.

The #MeToo revolution was overall well-received and given massive attention, both in media and by politicians and decision makers. It also spurred the compulsory preventive work at workplaces and numerous companies strengthened and revitalized their policies and routines. However, the country was also in something of a shock; is this really going on in gender-equal Sweden, in such massive numbers?

The movement also lit a fire under the ongoing political movement to implement a consent-based sexual assault legislation in Sweden. The self-proclaimed feminist prime minister Stefan Löfven and other politicians promised to bring the issue to a vote. And finally, on 1 July 2018, the law became a reality. In short, this new law clearly states that sex without consent is sexual assault. Victims of sexual assault in Sweden now have the support of a modern sexual assault legislation, in large part thanks to an organization called "FATTAI!"⁸ that has been spearheading the need for a consent-based culture, which this progressive law lays the groundwork for.

Furthermore, the Swedish government has also earmarked new resources to support the women's movements, and to improve education in schools with the explicit goal of reducing sexual assault and harassment.

Iceland



in Iceland – however, I see this as a way to keep the discussion about responsibility on the right track, says Tryggvi.

The Centre for Gender Equality is an Icelandic national agency responsible for administering the law, i.e., the Gender Equality Act, and on gender equality and equal rights for men and

The Icelandic population was very attentive to women’s testimonies of sexual assault. The stories of the #MeToo movement were widely embraced and the response has generally been positive. As well as some progress through the Gender Equality Act, the general #MeToo discussion included the topic of men’s responsibility, and men started to reflect on #masculinity.

In Iceland, women from a range of workforce sectors came forward to tell their stories of sexual harassment and violence, and were followed by female sports athletes, immigrant women and other groups. The media gave voice to the movement and even the response from the Icelandic government has been substantial.

The Prime Minister has made a coordinated response to #MeToo a political priority and the Icelandic parliament is looking into how interaction in politics can adhere to a higher standard.

According to Tryggvi Hallgrímsson, Specialist Advisor and Sociologist at the Centre for Gender Equality, there actually has not been much opposition.

– I do not think I’m overly arrogant when I say that there has not been any type of meaningful resistance. But I also believe that we are at a very delicate time for the #MeToo movement. In the first days and weeks, many spoke of a new era in gender relations,

but I’m afraid that is too optimistic. We must maintain the momentum and be on guard against any backlash, says Tryggvi.

In Iceland people actually started to listen and did not express doubt or question what women who spoke up were saying.

– People just listened. That was the most significant thing for us, as a culture, Tryggvi concludes.

“... because #masculinity”

A common reaction to the #MeToo movement from men worldwide has been ignorance or in some cases outrage that it has gone too far. In Iceland, men have been less inclined to voice their doubts about women’s experiences. Some men started a hashtag called “#karlmennskan”, which translates to “#masculinity”. The initiative aimed at giving men an opportunity to acknowledge their privileges but also the disadvantages of being male and having to conform to masculine identities. One example of a tweet read: “After a miscarriage I often went on car rides alone, just to cry. I just need to let the grief break through sometimes. I couldn’t let anyone see me like that because #masculinity.”

– It would be overly optimistic to say that the #MeToo movement has had a real effect on masculinity norms

” In Iceland, we address the need to engage men not only as allies for women’s rights but as beneficiaries of the positive effects of gender equality.

– Tryggvi Hallgrímsson, Specialist Advisor and Sociologist, Centre for Gender Equality

women. The purpose of the act is to promote gender equality in all spheres of society; education, labour market and violence prevention. The organization makes this happen through a broad mandate to instruct and inform government on gender equality in society.

– The law on gender equality is a tool for addressing not only irrefutable rights but also society’s objectives for creating a quality of life. I see this as central throughout all issues we attempt to discuss within the broad umbrella of “men and equality”, Tryggvi says.

Iceland has been trying to provide minimal funds for counselling to men, wanting to address anger in interpersonal or intimate relationships.

– These efforts are helping a small number of men, willing to seek help. But the push for these alternatives for men has not been taken seriously, and the counselling has, therefore, not been operationalized to the extent needed, Tryggvi explains.

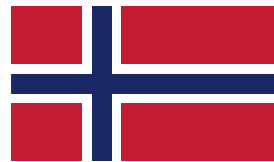
In the wake of #MeToo, feminism has been made a mainstream talking point, and now there’s a big opportunity to step out of the comfort zone and move the boundaries even further, before it’s too late. He thinks the need to address masculinities as we engage in diverse policy issues is pressing for all the Nordic countries, and that we must make it more central to the way we discuss gender politics.

– In Iceland, we address the need to engage men not only as allies for women’s rights but as beneficiaries of the positive effects of gender equality. •

Everything but a yes, is a no!



Norway



At the same time, it also created some political standstill. Suddenly, if a public figure made strong statements against sexual harassment, you were blamed for doing it for political points.

A lot of men have also voiced the opinion that #MeToo has gone too far

supporting alternative masculinities, according to Hedda:

- “Caring is the opposite to violence”, Norwegian researcher Jørgen Lorentzen has said, making the point that by promoting active fatherhood, or by encouraging boys to seek psy-

Politicians being accused of sexual misconduct stole much of the attention during the #MeToo movement in Norway. A number of petitions from female professionals underlined the importance of talking about destructive masculinity, but men generally remained silent about the matter. There was however a general agreement that sexual harassment is a widespread problem, and men that had been exposed to sexual violence felt encouraged by #MeToo to seek support.

A large number of women in Norway used the hashtag #MeToo to share stories of sexual harassment and abuse. There was also a number of petitions and group statements about sexual harassment in different professional sectors, such as the arts scene and medicine, due to female professionals coming together with other women within their discipline, and realizing they had similar experiences. The result was a widespread recognition that the #MeToo uproar needed to be taken seriously.

Hedda Hakvåg, Senior Advisor at Reform - Resource Center for Men, believes that the response to #MeToo in general has been quite positive:

– My impression is that #MeToo has created a shift in awareness, not only among men, but also among people in general. Suddenly, there is overall agreement that sexual harassment is a widespread problem. Another thing that has been positive is that many men who have experienced sexual violence themselves have felt encouraged by #MeToo to come forward and seek support.

Providing low-threshold services such as counselling, and a peer-to-peer helpline for men, is one of Reform's core strategies. In addition to this, the organization also functions as a national centre for gender equality that advocates for policy change and par-

ticipates in public debate and government hearings. They also have projects aimed at producing knowledge and creating change.

– We work to engage men in gender equality efforts, but we also raise awareness about the ways in which gender inequality impacts men. Violence prevention, health, sexuality, fatherhood, education and work life are among the many topics in our scope, says Hedda.

It is a man's world

Even though the connection to masculinity norms and men's responsibility was indeed made in many of the petitions signed by female professionals, the focus of the broader public debate in Norway has mainly been on workplace policies and individual cases.

– What perhaps stole the most attention was that several prominent male politicians received allegations of sexual harassment and eventually had to resign from their offices.

” **When more men and boys understand the negative effects of gender inequality, I think they are also more likely to become engaged for gender equality.**

– Hedda Hakvåg, Senior Advisor, Reform

and expressed concerns that men can't even flirt any longer, without being accused of sexual harassment.

– In the early days of #MeToo, journalist Aleksander Schau shared a series of tweets, revealing a culture of male harassment of women within the arts and media scene. This received quite a bit of positive response – and of course some backlash, says Hedda.

Male labour union organizers gathered 600 signatures for showing support for women's experiences of #MeToo in December 2017. But aside from that, there was little organized activism by men to show public support or take action against men's violence.

Reform indirectly contributes to the prevention of violence through the organization's other projects that focus on challenging gender norms and

chosocial health support, we are also doing a form of violence prevention.

Reform are also committed to raising awareness about men and boys who are survivors of domestic violence or sexual abuse. They are advocating for policy change that would provide training for shelter staff on supporting male victims.

– The gendered stereotypes that prevent people from seeing men as victims of violence are, I believe, part of the same gender system that facilitates men's violence against women. If we want to root out one, we need to root out both.

Hedda continues:

– If we truly want to achieve gender equality, we must engage people of all genders. Men and boys are also impacted by inequality, and thus, we need to address how gender norms and structural inequality affect men. When more men and boys understand the negative effects of gender inequality, I think they are also more likely to become engaged for gender equality. We need pro-equality men and boys to act as role models – for other men, but also for women and non-binary people. •

Nordic experiences of #MeToo

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At the publication of this study, almost a year has passed since #MeToo exploded worldwide. Whatever opinions people in the Nordic countries have had about the movement, it is hard to deny its impact, both on the discourse on sexual harassment and violence, but also on the concrete work to counter it. At the Nordic network meeting on men, masculinities and #MeToo, several common traits of progress and resistance were identified, as well as some promising ways forward.

The #MeToo revolution successfully made the following points:

- Sexual harassment and violence against women is a current problem of massive proportions – not something that only happened a long time ago, or is happening somewhere else
- Sexual harassment and violence has long-term and severe effects on the well-being of survivors
- Perpetrators of sexual harassment and violence can be found in all spheres of society. It is not a problem linked to a specific and limited group of men
- Perpetration of violence is linked to power and a sense of entitlement in relation to women
- In the Nordic societies, despite important gender equality progress, numerous obstacles remain that prevent survivors of violence from testifying, being believed, and obtaining justice
- The silence of bystanders creates a culture of acceptance towards the misconduct of many men, especially men in power positions



Progress

Challenging silence

There is definitely reason to talk about a pre and post #MeToo era. Pre #MeToo, women who shared stories of sexual harassment and assault were likely to be met with indifference, disbelief or shaming. After #MeToo, survivors are more likely to be listened to and believed, and, hopefully, there will be less voices airing their doubts about women's experiences. The public consciousness has increased, and there is a general agreement in the Nordic countries that sexual harassment and assault is a widespread problem. Experiences that were once taboo to speak about are now more possible to unearth, immune to negligence.

Ending impunity

#MeToo also challenged the impunity of perpetrators. The most beloved people on TV, famous actors or directors, big corporate bosses, and important board members in organizations were no longer protected by their status and power. We have not yet seen the long-term consequences of the #MeToo revolution, but for a moment, the barriers that had made perpetrators untouchable, crumbled and fell.

Speaking up

Alongside the open, public discussion on sexual harassment and violence, all Nordic countries, to varying extent, also saw important progress in the willingness of many men to talk about, and be self-critical on, their own role in the system of oppression that makes violence possible. Given that the silence of other men creates the sense that sexual harassment is accepted, every man speaking up in protection of women's rights to physical integrity matters. When men take action to stop being part of the problem and become part of the solution, perpetration can be hindered.

Looking inwards

#MeToo opened up space for men to discuss masculinity norms and men's responsibility. Some men were ashamed of how they themselves or their peers have played a part in the stories told. They showed honest concern over their actions and initiated some soul-searching to reflect on their behaviour, and what they might have done in the past.

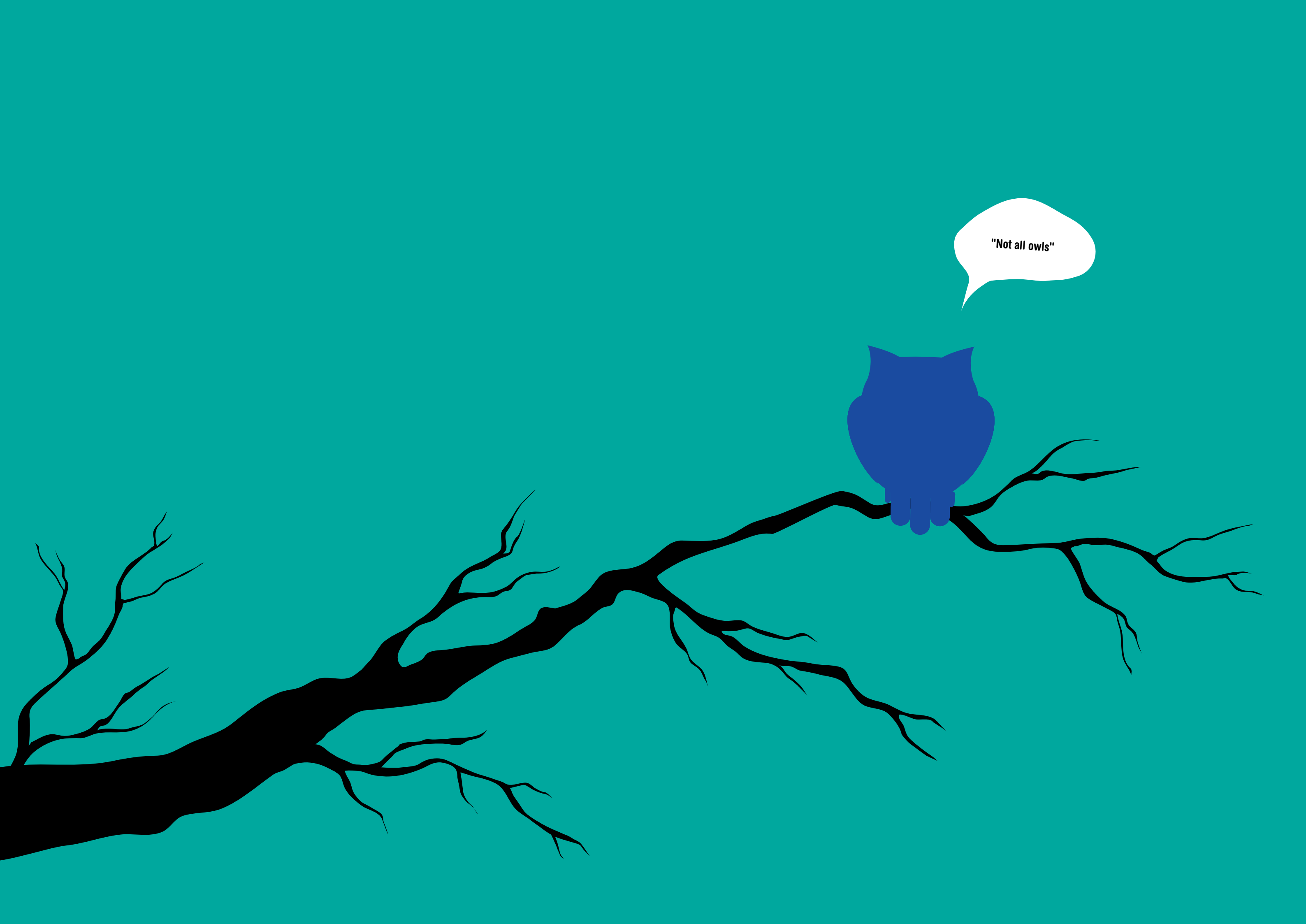
Men also shared confessions of perpetrating abuse, on social media. These testimonies were met with some criticism, arguing that men once again stole the spotlight from women's stories. In some cases, these men were praised for speaking out, but still did not take responsibility for their actions. To solve this problem, some organizations created safe spaces to enable these difficult and vulnerable conversations.

Structural change

With these important progresses in mind, there is still need for comprehensive, long-term efforts to counter and put an end to sexual harassment and violence. As previously shown, #MeToo gave leverage to important processes of legislative and structural change in several of the Nordic countries. There has also been significant change within the work field, such as stronger implementation of policies on sexual harassment. The reach of structural change in the different Nordic countries seems directly related to how advanced the gender equality policy area was prior to #MeToo. An important task for decision makers is to make sure that these efforts continue, and that time and resources are channelled to systematic interventions to prevent sexual harassment and violence. •

At the beginning of #MeToo, a lot of men felt insecure of how to engage in the movement and how to respond when women shared their experiences of abuse.

The Swedish organization MÄN produced a list of five tips for men. You find them on page 47.



"Not all owls"

Resistance

Though the overall response to #MeToo in the Nordic countries was positive, there was also some resistance. Counter-arguments and backlash show many similarities between the different countries.

“#MeToo has gone too far”

When women shared their experiences of sexual harassment and violence they were occasionally met with aggression and called on to not accuse men. What was perceived as scapegoating of individual male celebrities and politicians in the media made some men upset about the public shaming of male personalities they previously identified with or admired. Many felt accused and were concerned about how they personally and/or men in general might be portrayed in the #MeToo debate. Others aired the concern that under the perceived “witch hunt” of #MeToo it would no longer be possible for men to approach women. Many men became uneasy when they realised that from now on there might be consequences to their actions: “Isn’t a man allowed to flirt anymore without being accused of sexual harassment?”

Blaming the few for the crimes of many

The sense that #MeToo went too far also had other expressions. The severe misconduct and violence perpetrated by some (named) men was undeniable, but critics withheld that “not all men” are bad. By focusing on the few visible perpetrators, the discussion could be steered away from violence against women as a structural problem.

When men proclaimed that “not all men” are abusing women, the focus shifted away from talking about destructive forms of masculinity, and men’s responsibility for the problem. This is not a new phenomenon; anyone working to address violence against women as a structural problem come across the “not all men” argument. However, as women persisted in linking catcalling, sexual harassment, controlling behaviour, violence, and rape, the structural nature of men’s violence against women remained in focus in the public debate.

Angry men

At the margins of the general public’s reactions to #MeToo there is also the growing movement of angry men with a feeling of loss of entitlement. We are living in a world which is globalised, multicultural and diverse, and some men are really struggling with a real and/or perceived loss of power and control. Some men believe that women are actually better off than men in today’s society, despite all statistics proving the opposite.

Movements fuelled by hatred against women are lurking in the shadows, like the online subculture of so called “incels”. The incel is usually a white, heterosexual man who define himself as an “involuntary celibate”, unable to find a female partner despite desiring one. Discussions in incel forums online are often characterized by resentment, self-pity, self-loathing, misogyny, racism, a sense of entitlement to sex, as well as hatred towards the women who “deny” incels sex, and the men who “are given” sex by these women. The world’s post #MeToo progress on gender equality is creating a rift, and it is paramount that some men’s confusion and anger is addressed. •

Moving forward



Many of the organizations and experts from the Nordic countries that came together in Stockholm, in May 2018, have extensive experience in working to change destructive masculinity norms and to prevent sexual harassment and violence. When exploring the Nordic experiences of #MeToo and finding constructive ways forward, some common features became visible. The following pages provide a brief description of good practices and promising methods.

Safe spaces for self-reflection

A critical challenge when #MeToo exploded on the public stage was how to bring men on board the process of change, and how to avoid reactions of disbelief, shame, and resistance.

Many men told of the complex feelings that #MeToo brought about.

- » Disbelief: “Is the problem really this common?”
- » Shame: “How could I not know about this, when it apparently has happened to so many women that are close to me?”
- » Fear: “What have I done that I wasn’t even aware of has harmed someone?”
- » Anger: “How is this still going on?”
- » Commitment: “I need to do something about this.”
- » Confusion: “What can I do? How can I deal with this without becoming yet another man taking up space in a revolution that belongs to women?”

One way forward was to offer men safe spaces to reflect on the feelings that the #MeToo testimonies brought to the surface, and to give men some support in reaching out and connecting with other men. To create safe spaces means, in short, to invite men to a non-judging environment, to be critical about power imbalances, to use guiding questions to facilitate self-reflection, and to encourage men to be vulnerable in front of each other. This can happen online, in individual counselling, or in groups.

Spaces like these are quite hard to find in a patriarchy which teaches men to be self-reliant and “strong”, to be successful and not emotional. The very space itself can constitute a challenge to the stereotypical norms of masculinity that also are the breeding ground of sexual harassment and violence.

With support and guidance by people who have set out to dismantle patriarchal norms, it becomes possible for men to understand the unequal power structures in new ways, it becomes easier to discover the ways in which they are upheld, and one’s own role in this process. Hence, change becomes possible. Using safe spaces to promote men’s self-reflection and transformation is a valuable tool in combating sexual harassment and violence.

Consent-based culture

Without disregarding the important processes of responsibility, justice and reparation that survivors of sexual violence are entitled to, and the role of accountable men in those processes, one of the most important things that organizations working in this field can do, is preventing these violations from happening in the first place. The majority of the organizations present at the Nordic network meeting carry out work to transform masculinity norms, promote a culture of consent, and challenge the objectification of women. The primary target group is often youth, but this work is both necessary and viable in larger groups of the population.

There are a number of elaborated methods and programs at hand in the different Nordic countries. They share several components, but with slightly varying entry points. Usually, the work is process-oriented, aimed at reflection, rather than education, and it offers opportunities for the target group to explore values and personal experiences.

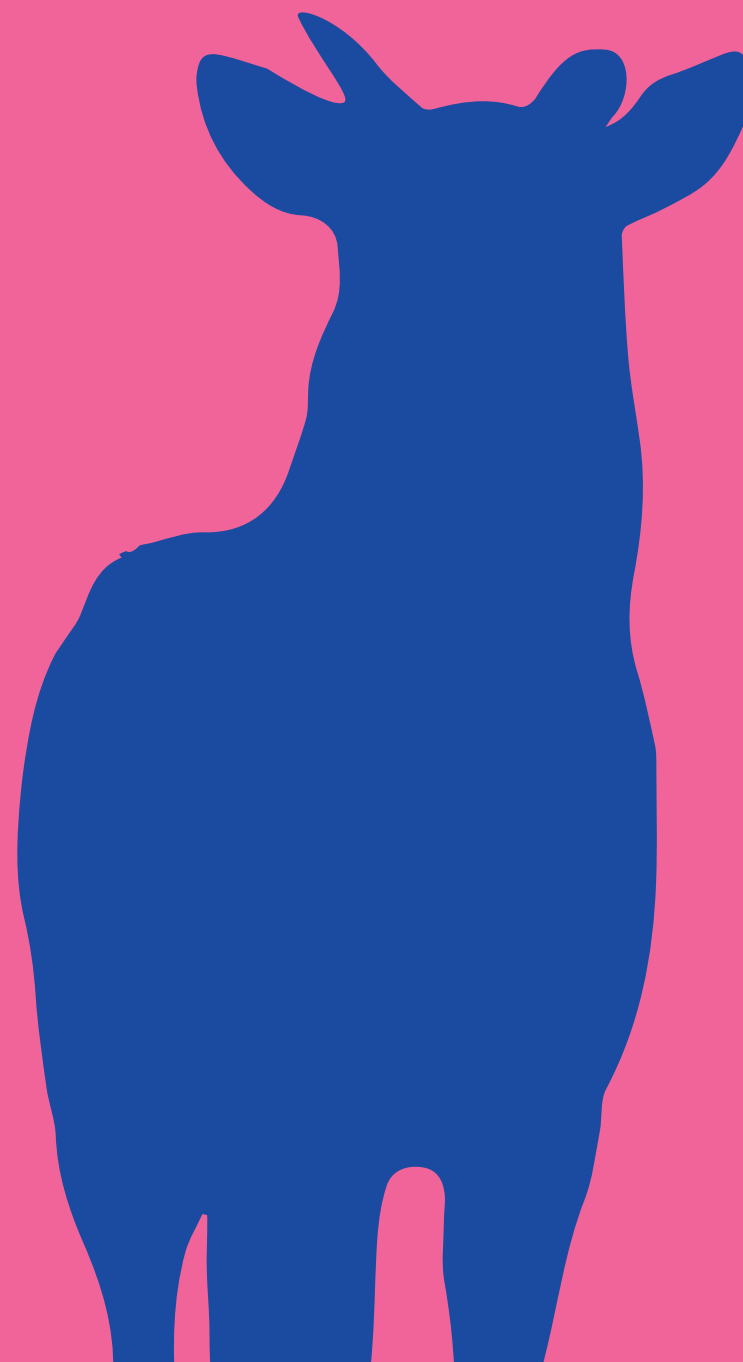
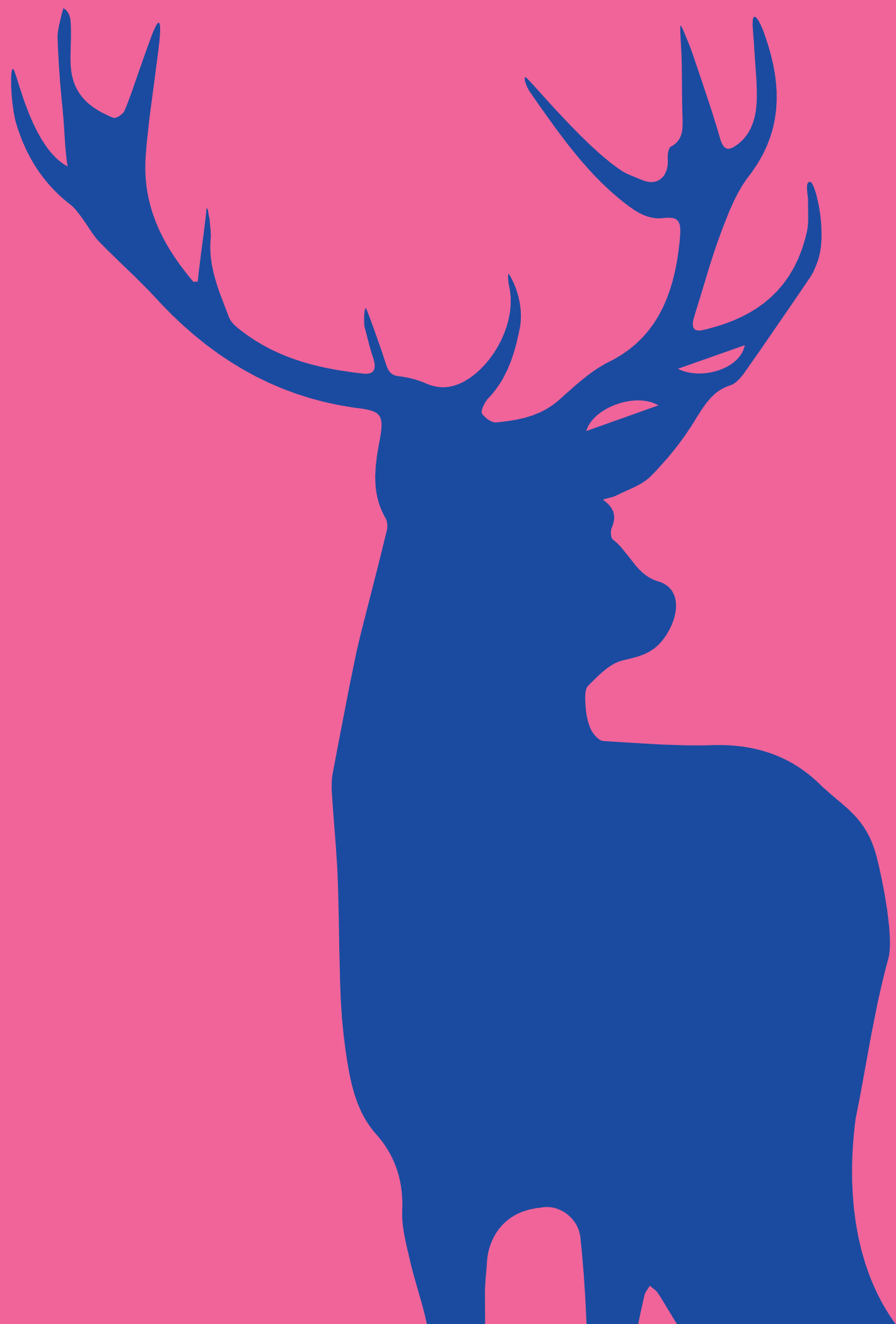
In the group sessions, interactivity is encouraged, and value exercises, short film clips and scenario exercises, are used. If possible, the same target group meets on several occasions, allowing for the process to continue between sessions. This process-centred way of working is based on a norm-critical approach.

About men and responsibility

An important challenge when working with men and boys in relation to the #MeToo movement is how to deal with the issue of responsibility. It is clear that, apart from lifting the stigma from survivors of sexual harassment and violence, a key result of #MeToo is that it has placed guilt and responsibility where it belongs; with perpetrators and silent bystanders.

Men might, when faced with the stories of #MeToo, come to realize, or suspect, that they themselves have been perpetrators of acts of harassment or sexual violence. To encourage men to take responsibility for their actions is of great importance. First and foremost, men must practice the art of listening. Another important aspect is to take full responsibility for one's actions, and not implicitly suggest that the other person has some responsibility when someone crosses their boundaries. Taking responsibility can imply asking for forgiveness, without expecting it to be given. Finally, perpetrators can offer reparation for harm caused, materially, or in other ways. It's everyone's responsibility to support this process when engaging with men post #MeToo.

Since masculinity norms are still not part of everyone's understanding of gender and gender power dynamics, proven methods can add a framework and language to make masculinity norms visible and, hence, possible to address and challenge. Boys and men need to be given the opportunity to critically reflect and to unlearn patriarchy – not once, but throughout the lifecycle. Piece by piece, silence, sexual harassment, and violence can be replaced with a culture of consent and active bystanders. •



**Feminism is the radical notion that
women are people**

Five things that men can do when women testify about sexual harassment



1 – Listen and confirm

Encourage women who want to tell you more about their experiences, and show them that you believe them.



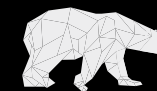
2 – Start with yourself

Contemplate your own behaviours. If you feel that you've crossed the line, now is a good time to seek help.



3 – Talk to other men

Discuss your thoughts and feelings and encourage other men to do the same.



4 – Speak out

Make yourself a promise to never be silent again when other men go too far, for example when they pull a sexist joke.



5 – Engage!

Organize for change. Join a non-profit. Talk to your boss, teacher or coach. Everything counts!

Psst! Read more at män.se



Tryggvi Hallgrímsson
Specialist Advisor, Sociologist



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As a specialist adviser and sociologist at the Centre for Gender Equality Tryggvi's research and consulting has focused on work environments of both private and public organizations. Working with gender mainstreaming and gender equality plans in companies, his attention has centred on monitoring the implementation of aims put forth in the Icelandic Gender Equality Act – among them, the requirement that employers shall take measures to prevent sexual harassment. In recent years Tryggvi has consulted the minister for gender equality on measures to increase men's involvement in the discussion on gender equality.



Hanna Navier
Communications Manager



MÄN – Sweden
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Hanna's extensive experience comes from journalism. She studied gender studies, political science, and international relations at Stockholm University. Hanna has a long background as an activist. As a volunteer for the online chat for boys, Killfrågor.se, Hanna began her engagement in MÄN, where she now runs the communications team. She has been a board member in several Swedish non-profit organizations, and has been president of the Stockholm section of the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education.



Kimmo Saastamoinen
Counsellor, Coordinator



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Kimmo's adventures on the field of social services began approximately 12 years ago during the civil service year spent with visually impaired youth. After moving to the capital, and finishing a Bachelor degree in Social Services, he's been working with themes such as mediation and counselling on crimes and disputes, support person activity, and psychosocial support for refugee men, volunteer recruiting, training, and management. For the past three years, Kimmo has done cultural and gender sensitive youth work as a counsellor and coordinator at Poikien Talo in Helsinki.



Harry Lunabba
Senior Lecturer



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Harry is first and foremost a father, husband and dog owner. His professional background is grounded in social work regarding child protection. Harry's expertise is in youth, child and gender studies. At the University of Helsinki, Harry has the role of Senior Lecturer, a position earned by the extensive educational background he obtained; a PhD in Social science, and various other social work studies. Harry aims to educate social workers, promote research, and do knowledge-based social work. He wants to generate awareness of gender structures in children's and young person's lives, and undertake practice-relevant research in social work.



Henriette Højberg
Head of Secretariat



DareGender – Denmark
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Henriette has been working with gender equality and violence for over a decade, and has been the head of Danners Resource Centre, and the head of KVINFOs national department. She has been working with women's shelters, violence against women, and gender equality, not only nationally, but also internationally. Today, she is the head of DareGender, an organization that aim to engage men in gender equality, which she founded in 2016.



Mie Møller Nielsen
Head of Secretariat



Men's Health Forum – Denmark
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Under an extensive period of seven years, Mie has been actively working with health promotion in local government. Since 2014 she has focused specifically on men's health in Forum for Mænds Sundhed. Her educational background is complex, and consists of a degree in health education centred around communication of specific health. She also has management training with a focus on business development. Mie's expertise is centered around specialized knowledge about men's health. She has well-honed networking skills, and catching the interest of external parties in her field of study. Mie is currently Head of Secretariat at Forum for Mænds Sundhed, an organization that put men's health on the agenda, both politically and directly to men.



Kalle Laanterä
Director



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At the age of 15, Kalle started his career in social work, being a club leader at youth service for 10-12-year-old boys. Focusing in on youth services and child welfare, Kalle later finished a Bachelor degree in Social Services, and started working in the field. Years later, thanks to the talks and self-reflection they did at Kalle's next employment at Poikien Talo, he really started to contemplate gender equality issues and masculinity. Now, as a Director at Poikien Talo, Kalle makes sure everything runs smoothly. He conducts everyday tasks from writing funding applications and reports, being active in different networks, providing a healthy work environment, to representing the organization in press and politics.



Hedda Hakvåg
Senior Advisor



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Hedda has a master's degree in gender and intersectionality from the University of British Columbia. In 2015, she started working as a Senior Advisor at Reform – A Resource Centre for Men. She combines theoretical knowledge about gender issues, sexual abuse, gender-based violence, and prostitution, with experience of practical violence prevention. At Reform, Hedda has a special responsibility for men and gender equality from an intersectional perspective. She is also a project leader for Stop Girlfriend, and is responsible for coordinating Reform's project portfolio.

Sources and resources

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- 2 Gärningspersoners kön och ålder vid misshandel, hot, rån och sexualbrott – en beskrivning utifrån misstankestatistiken och Nationella trygghetsundersökningen, Brottsförebyggande rådet (BRÅ) (2014)
- 3 THE MAN BOX: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico. Brian Heilman, Gary Barker, Alexander Harrison (2017)
- 4 NUPP Ungdomsenkät, Myndigheten för ungdoms- och civilsamhällefrågor (MUCF) (2015)
- 5 Violence prevention the evidence, World Health Organization, (2010)
- 6 Krahé B. (2016) Societal Responses to Sexual Violence Against Women: Rape Myths and the “Real Rape” Stereotype. In: Kury H., Redo S., Shea E. (eds) Women and Children as Victims and Offenders: Background, Prevention, Reintegration. Springer, Cham
- 7 ”Parenthood, Violence Prevention and Masculinity norms – A fact-sheet about Men and Gender Equality in the Nordic Countries” is a commission between The Nordic Council of Ministers and NIKK (Nordic information for knowledge about gender) (2018)
- 8 "FATTA!", meaning “GET IT!” in Swedish, is a non-profit organization for everyone who wants to get involved fighting against sexual violence, and working towards consent in practice as well as legislation. More info: www.fatta.nu/about

This page contains links to relevant organizations that aid in the struggle to end sexual harassment and violence, focusing not only on masculinity, but also gender equality in general.

MISCELLANEOUS

- » The Nordic Council – www.norden.org/en/nordic-council
- » MenEngage Alliance – www.menengage.org

DENMARK

- » DareGender – www.daregender.dk
- » Forum for Mænds Sundhed – www.sundmand.dk/Forum-for-maend-og-sundhed.php

NORWAY

- » Reform – www.reform.no

FINLAND

- » Poikien Talo – www.poikientalo.fi
- » Poikien Puhelin – www.vaestoliitto.fi/vaestoliitto/mita_vaestoliitto_tekee/palvelut/puhelinneuvonta/poikien_puhelin
- » Väestöliitto – www.vaestoliitto.fi
- » Pro-feminist men Finland – www.profeministimiehet.net
- » Loisto Settlementti – www.loistosetlementti.fi

ICELAND

- » Centre for Gender Equality – www.jafnretti.is
- » Stígamót – www.stigamot.is
- » Kvennaskólanum/Kvennaskólinn í Reykjavík – www.kvenno.is

SWEDEN

- » Unizon – www.unizon.se
- » RFSU – www.rfsu.se
- » MÄN – www.mfj.se
- » Under Kevlaret – www.underkevlaret.se
- » Locker Room Talk – www.lockerroomtalk.se



Men, Masculinity and #MeToo

**Nordic experiences of the movement
that shattered the culture of silence**

This study has been produced by the Swedish organization MÄN. It is primarily based on presentations and discussions at a network meeting organized in Stockholm, in May 2018, together with other Nordic civil society organizations committed to ending men's violence. Interviews were conducted with representatives from organizations participating in the meeting.

