GENDER EQUALITY IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS

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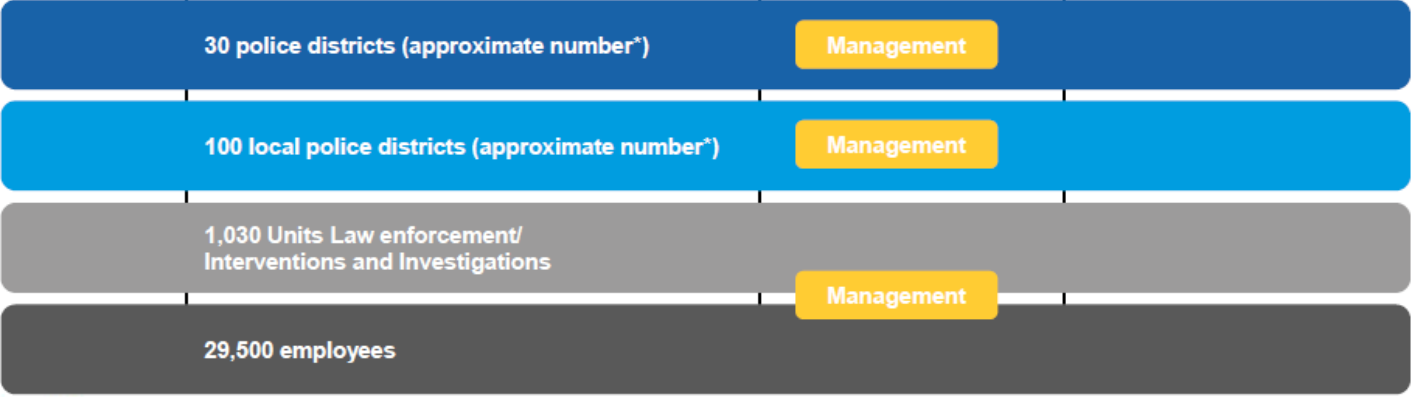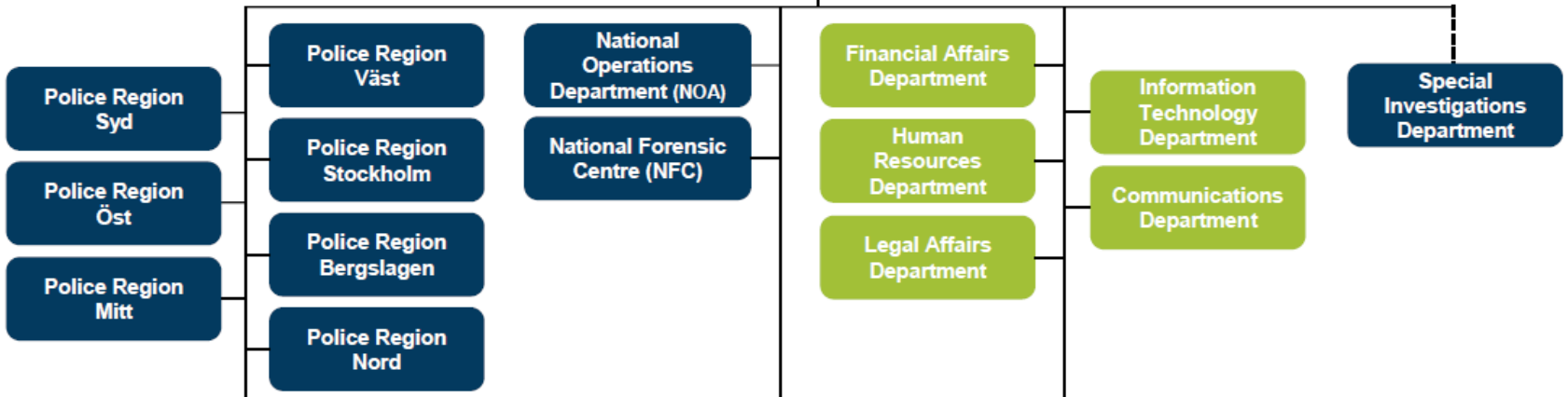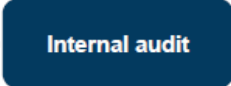
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CONDITIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN POLICE ORGANIZATIONS
- BACKGROUND -

- The Swedish police force express a need to interface better with today's multicultural society → public trust, more diversity and equality

- Quantitative gender equality in the Swedish Police:
  - 43 % women in total (many of them are civilians)
  - 33 % of sworn police officers are women
  - 26 % of leaders in sworn police areas are women

- Most countries have lower percentages of women in policing → global significance to study gender equality in the Police

- The Swedish case can make visible more universal patterns and dilemmas when it comes to aiming for gender equality within the Police

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QUANTITATIVE VERSUS QUALITATIVE GENDER EQUALITY

- The *police culture* is often referred to as one of the main causes of experiences of inequality and described as being built on male (macho/masculinist), conservative and sometimes racialized norms and values

- Quant: By aiming for gender equality, organizations often introduce quantitative measures in which the problem of gender inequality is assumed to be solved by adjusting the numbers of the minority sex (i.e., women, in the case of the police)

- Qual: Qualitative gender equality measures are of importance in changing experiences of inclusion and exclusion in relation to gender, thus enabling a change of traditional (masculine/macho) norms within police organizations

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TODAY'S FOCUS

To discuss the conditions for gender equality in police leadership and police organizations, from a Swedish case.

- Question: To what extent can measures aiming to increase the number of female leaders be seen as contributing to the learning of new norms that support qualitative changes in gender equality within the police?

- Material: The discussion is based on about 30 interviews with male and female police leaders in the Northern Sweden.

- Theory: Based on a doing gender perspective: how is gender – and, as a consequence, gender equality – done and/or redone (talk and actions) in leadership within the Swedish police?

What can be learnt from the Swedish case?

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IS INCREASING THE NUMBER OF WOMEN THE WHOLE SOLUTION?

- If men and women differ qualitatively in the way they do gender in the police organization, in police leadership and in gender equality work → increasing the number of women is maybe the most important strategy for change

- If men and women do not qualitatively differ in this way → increasing the number of women is not enough to reach qualitative gender equality and increase women's experiences of inclusion

- So… How do police leaders in the Swedish case express:
  1. why there are so few women leaders, and
  2. what should be done about this issue.

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EXPLANATIONS FOR THE LACK OF FEMALE POLICE OFFICERS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AND STRATEGIES TO CHANGE IT

	Explanations for the lack of female leaders	**Strategies** for increasing the number of female leaders
Individual: Focus on women as individuals	**A** Women lack the capacity, drive and self-confidence needed for leadership *N=MEN*	**B** Change/develop the women *N=MEN/WOMEN*
Organisational: Focus on organisational structure and culture	**C** The organisation treats women differently than men due to a male norm *N=WOMEN (men)*	**D** Change/develop the culture and structure of organisation *N=WOMEN (men)*

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GENDERED EXPLANATIONS

- Women often say:
  - Women need to be better, more competent, tougher and clearer to be accepted as leaders in the Police (the problem is in the culture/the organization)

- Men often say:
  - Women have low faith in their own ability, they have lower self-confidence, they are self-critical and do not show the same driving force to be leaders (the problem lies within the women themselves)

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QUOTES: WHAT SHOULD BE DONE?

- "You have to make the men aware of this [gender equality] too. I think they are easy-going... It's like it is the women's job... to figure out what to do if we are to be liked and accepted... They must develop an awareness so that they don't make scurrilous statements about women." (Female 5)

Do women need to get extra support, education, networks and mentors?

- "I would like to make activities more gender integrated in some way. Because we have had women's networks, but the men just laugh and say 'oh well now it's women's network time'. It backfires against us. And some women who are a bit smarter say 'there is no point being a part of the women's network; it's no good, it just strikes back at me'." (Female 11)

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CONCLUSIONS

Is the solution for getting more female leaders within the Police, to invest in gender-specific support strategies for women ?

> → Be cautious! If the problem lies in the organizational structure or culture, actions that only focus on women themselves can hardly be enough.

> → The risk is that support strategies exclusively for women focus on gender differences and reinforce the view that women are 'deviant' or 'weak' and men are 'normal' and 'strong' because they do not need special initiatives.

Both women and men in the Police do gender in a traditional way. But, males do gender in a gender-stereotypical way to a greater extent than females do. Just hire more women then?

> → Increasing the number of female leaders (quant.) could improve the conditions necessary for achieving qualitative gender equality (i.e., feelings of inclusion regardless of gender). But it's not that easy!

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WHAT CAN BE LEARNT?

- Interventions involving all levels of the organisation's structure, culture, employers, employees, men and women need to be put in place to really bring about new norms.

- Reducing the internal division of work between women and men could be one step towards reaching the goal of gender equality in the police organization and its leadership tiers.

- Achieving gender equality can hardly fall on the shoulders of women alone, and the goal cannot be achieved by merely increasing the number of female leaders, even though my study shows that this might be a positive catalyst for change.

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Haake, U. (2018). Conditions for gender equality in police leadership – making way for senior police women. *Police Practice and Research: An International Journal, 19*(3), 241-252

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