

## ABSTRACT

### **PROGRESSIVE WOMEN, TRADITIONAL MEN: THE POLITICS OF 'KNOWLEDGE' AND GENDERED STORIES OF 'DEVELOPMENT' IN THE NORTHERN PERIPHERY OF THE EU**

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This dissertation in Cultural Anthropology and Women's Studies is an ethnographic account of the meaning and politics of social scientific "knowledge production", exemplified in gendered stories of regional "development" in the inland northern Swedish province of Jämtland, after Sweden's 1995 entry into the EU and the cultural meanings they assign to men and women. European integration is experienced as an ongoing peripheralization of modernity, registered in visions of regional "development" centered on the heteronormatively defined ideal of *jämställdhet* (equality between men and women) and on the "resources" of place and history, forged in a cultural imaginary shared by social scientific researchers, state agencies, and grass-roots "practitioners".

Based in 18 months of engaged collaborative ethnographic research following the every-day "development" work and travels of women's "networks", "projects", village councils, resource centers, state representatives, researchers, grass-roots organizers, and other actors, the analysis is also informed by informal and semi-structured interviews and close readings of documents, conferences, reports and other storied artifacts of modern knowledge production.

Six extensive, autonomous chapters center on: (1) the dilemmas and possibilities of feminist and ethnographic research in "a doubly familiar" context; 'at home'/in the West and of/within social science knowledge production; (2) the peripheralization of Swedish modernity in the rural north through the ongoing role of the social engineering of gender; (3) gendered stories of regional identity as both resistance and resource; (4) the construction of "traditional" masculinity as an obstacle to (regional) progress and the local and "transnational" implications thereof; (5) stories and body politics of "feminism" among young women representing hope and crisis for a continuously depopulating region; (6) the

ethnographic dilemmas of studying the politics of “development” and social scientific knowledge production. An engaged critical ethnography, it explains how, in the late nineties, gendered stories present women as progressive leaders of “development” and men as “traditional” obstacles, and above all how, in the EU and state directed neoliberal visions of development, gender, identity, history, and “knowledge” itself are “enterprised up”.

Key words: European Union, Sweden, modernity, “development”, equality between men and women, knowledge production, social science studies, ethnographic methods, feminism, gender, heteronormativity, enterprise culture.