

Designing Equality of Opportunity in National Innovation Systems Canada and Sweden A Comparative Perspective

A. Rowe¹

¹ McMaster University, Canada

Summary This research is the first of its kind to conduct a comparative analysis of national innovation systems in Canada and Sweden from the perspective of gender equality. This findings of the research address different approaches to gender equality and diversity in the areas of innovation policy, performance measurement, and resource allocation. This study speaks to the themes of gender, diversity, and innovation discussed at GS11 2017.

1. Relevance

This study explores how national innovation systems might be reimagined to support gender equality and diversity, thus changing the institutional landscape to support a wider range of innovations, and distributing the benefits of innovation in a more equitable way. This research also contributes more widely to the existing body of gender, public policy, and innovation literature in Canada and Sweden respectively.

2. Aims & Objectives

In Canada and Sweden, more women now graduate from university than men, yet women are underrepresented in leadership positions in most areas of the economy associated with innovation. As innovation policy expands in scope and relevance within the economy, it is important to question gender-neutral innovation norms. Gender equality in innovation policy is a matter of scientific excellence, social justice, and economic rationality. This dissertation explains how policy decisions at the national level shape women's participation in innovation in the public sector, private sector, and academia in Canada and Sweden.

3. Methods

This qualitative case study includes 44 interviews with innovation leaders in the public sector, private sector, and academia in Canada and Sweden as well as policy experts at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development in Paris, France. The interview data is contrasted with formal document analysis to provide a holistic comparison of representation through the presence and absence of reference to gender and innovation policy across cases.

4. Results

Canada and Sweden have adopted different approaches to funding innovation at the national level. Sweden outspends Canada on R&D as well as investment in primary and secondary education. However, from a gender perspective, the implications of different spending patterns are minimal. Occupational segregation, in combination with prevailing masculine innovation norms, strongly influences when and where innovation resources are spent in both countries.

5. Conclusions

To advance gender equality within national innovation systems in Canada and Sweden, it is necessary to adopt a broader definition of innovation, one which recognizes innovations developed outside of commercial settings. The findings also explain the multiplicative effects of gender inequality at the intersection of institutions: university, government, and private sector.

6. Contact details: Dr. Andrea Rowe, roweam2@mcmaster.ca