

# Patricarchy strikes back ?

by [Malin Björk](#)

Being Swedish, I have had the misfortune of seeing “feminist studies” and “women’s studies”, becoming “gender studies” departments (and at the same time becoming less politicised spaces). Another important feature of this shift has been the increased focus - and resources - on men’s or “masculinity studies”.

I don’t question that there is a need to challenge the construction of masculinity. On the contrary it is absolutely needed in order for us to be able to transform our societies towards more equality. And there are some brilliant feminist (men and women) researchers on masculinity around. But if we turn to the impact on the political agenda this focus on Men has had weak results or even counter-acted the feminist projects for gender transformation. Moreover, it seems as if truly feminist men are having difficulties to mobilise men for a cause that would deconstruct masculinity as we know it and partly do away with male



norms and privileges as an effect.

And maybe this is the explanation why, most of the time when the issue of ‘Men and gender equality’ is brought to political level and discourses it is less about really wanting to change gender constructions and relations, and more about safeguarding men’s interests or even re-establishing a ‘balance’ in gender equality discourses that is perceived to be unfair (there is simply too much talk about women and women’s rights..yep).

Now it seems as if the Nordics have had an impact at in European level. The past six months, several conferences and seminars have been announced at EU level about ‘Men and gender equality’. The Finnish EU presidency last year did one major gender equality event. It was on men. And judging from the draft documents prepared, many of the male activists present (researchers and other) were just boldly defending the interests of men...or how do you interpret the call for “institutional mechanisms and specific bodies for men’s interests and perspectives to be taken into account” ?! I’ll spare you the rest of the draft conclusions. It just seems as if Patriarchy has invented another way to get ‘inside’ and strike back at feminism, making men’s demands visible and once again making women’s demand for equality less visible !