

## ABSTRACT –Understanding the unsuccessfulness of gender diversity in the Danish Defense

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Creating successful changes within an organisation can be difficult, especially if you set out on a journey without a destination. This is the exact impression one may get, when looking at the Danish Armed Forces policy for diversity. The policy was introduced in 2011 and received recognition for its progressive approach. However, only little action has been taken since, and statistics reveal that the Danish Armed Forces have not met their objectives, all the whilst the number of females in the Danish Armed Forces has not increased but rather dropped in the last five years. Furthermore, demographic changes in Denmark are challenging the predominant narrative of a soldier being a Caucasian white male.

To put it into Clausewitz's words, the challenge that the Danish Armed Forces is facing is this: *"The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgement that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."*

Based on my studies of gender diversity in the Danish Armed Forces, this paper zooms in on the female officer. Women make up 50% of the Danish population and thus it would be obvious to assume great potential in the Danish Defense for attracting and retaining women. The fact is, however, that Danish women seem to pay only little heed to the Danish Armed Forces as a potential career path. Even to this day, there are less than 6 % female officers in the Danish Armed Forces, based on a prior research.

The paper sets off to explore this equation from a new-institutional approach supported by empirical research from six qualitative interviews with female officers from the three branches; army, navy and airforce.

First of all the conclusion to the first part of my analysis discloses that the small number of female officers – from a new-institutional perspective – may be caused by a widespread notion of the Danish Armed Forces as a highly path-dependent organisation with close to no incentive to change. As there is no visible action from the leadership towards redesigning this arena, the policy may consequently seem set up for failure in the short run.

Secondly my qualitatively interviews with females officers reveal that most of these officers, both the ones presently in active duty and the ones who have left the Danish Armed Forces, feel they have needed to fight for acceptance and equity. In addition, they express that certain organisational conditions based on the military profession, culture and language challenge their

motivation, specifically because they connect their identity with the strong self-image of an officer.

Very few female interviewees have had a female role model in the defense to guide them towards a military career. This is vital to their perception of the Danish Defense, and therefore I have chosen to support my empirical findings and my analysis with Weicks seven properties of sensemaking in order to analyse how sensemaking creates a deeper understanding of the diversity challenges in a micro perspective.

In conclusion, this paper provides a possible foundation for strategic recommendations for the Danish Armed Forces in the process of creating success by increasing diversity, and for making strategic recommendations.

My core findings show that it is imperative for the Danish Armed Forces to acknowledge the nature of this particular battle in order to create changes and that needed change is made up by both normative understanding, organisational culture and rhetoric in the Danish Defense.