WOMEN’S STORIES ABOUT LEADERSHIP  
- Development through narratives

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Presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference, August 20-24, 2003, Lund University, Sweden

The aim of the paper is to present a model for starting up development processes through story telling.

The KK foundation (Stiftelsen för Kunskap och Kompetens) has initiated the KrAft programme as an attempt to enhance cooperation between universities and small and medium sized companies (SME). We are working in a partnership between researchers and consultants with three KrAft groups of female leaders from small and medium sized companies. A KrAft group consists of about 10-12 representatives, in our case women in leading positions, from SMEs. About 7 SMEs are represented in each KrAft group.

The KrAft programme stresses that it is the group members themselves are responsible for the process and the topics for the training. The role for the researchers and project leaders is to facilitate the process and to contribute with the expertise demanded. The KrAft groups meet in dialogue based training for about 12 days during a year.

In our paper we will describe the ”story telling” method we have used to start the processes and how we together with the participants have found out topics for the training programme. We are reflecting upon narratives as a knowledge creating method where entrepreneurs and researchers in interaction together build new knowledge and where the women’s experiences from their daily work build the ground for new and collective competence – so called local theories.

We are dealing with how the women express their need for new competence and how the dynamic interactive process leads to new ways for the participants to handle their leadership roles. Together with the female participants we are specially focusing leadership from a gender perspective.

In our paper we will highlight research methods, where researchers and practitioners in joint action take part in development processes, and how these methods both contribute theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge to working life.