



UMEÅ UNIVERSITET

Feministiska fantasier

Mellan marknad och feminism

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Feminist fantasies. Between market and feminism

Abstract

Feminism is highly visible in contemporary Sweden. The government labels itself feminist, artists and influencers take a stand for feminism, businesses are branded with feminist advertising and feminist tropes and symbols are visible on clothes, art and jewellery. What this kind of feminism means is not always easy to discern. However, what is evident is that this visible and popular kind of feminism is highly compatible with business and market values. From this starting point, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the different meanings of feminism in four different but concurrent arenas. By using psychoanalytical discourse theory, I analyse: (i) a particular governmental arena through a policy analysis of the governmental articulation of social innovation, (ii) a commercial arena through a study of an advertising campaign, (iii) a business arena through interviews with feminist business owners and (iv) an activist arena through interviews with house-squatters. I use these analyses to explore how feminism is used, articulated and understood at the nexus of the market and feminism. What feminist discourses are articulated in the studied arenas? How are feminist values utilised? What expressions of social change are made intelligible and desirable? How are feminist subjects and the preconditions for feminist mobilisation shaped?

Analysing the results of the four studies together shows that a fantasy of the benevolent business is created and sustained. Such a fantasy enhances a logic of good-hearted and ethical capitalism within which business and entrepreneurship become understood as activism, articulated as the ultimate solution to social problems. Such a logic inevitably shapes the preconditions for feminist organisation and activism, and encourages individual solutions at the expense of collective efforts. The fantasy of the benevolent business is immersed in and reinforced by fantasy echoes of feminist and social democratic history. These fantasy echoes both conceal inherent conflicts and intensify the force of the fantasy. In order to sustain this fantasy, the desire to make a difference is directed towards ethical practices. These are articulated as individual practices, thus saturating feminism and social change with individualism. Hence, feminist subjects are shaped into individual and entrepreneurial subjects who desire ethical choices. Furthermore, the thesis shows how “the public” is structured as the guarantor of the fantasy of the good business, which entails that certain expectations are attached to the idea of the public. Such expectations shape how feminism and the work towards social change are organised and practised.

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popular feminism, post feminism, social innovation, feminist business, activism, discourse theory, psychoanalysis, fantasy, enjoyment, Sweden

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