

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE HEARINGS IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

Drawing from Pitkin and recent feminist theorising on the representation of women, the paper presents an analysis of the representation of women in the expert hearings by the parliamentary standing committees in Finland. On the basis of a quantitative analysis of the experts utilised in 2005, the paper investigates the descriptive (gender composition of the committees and the experts) and substantive representation of women (inclusion of women's NGOs, state gender equality agencies and gender studies scholars) in the expert hearings.

The results point out the gender segregation of committees and the expert pool. In average, every third expert consultation was by a woman, but their share of consultations varied very much by sector and committee. Those committees with the highest proportion of women also tended to use female experts most often. Women's group interests as defined by the study were consulted seldom and they very much concentrated in one committee and few issues considered to pertain 'directly' to women.

The results of the analysis are discussed in light of the different opportunities and barriers of the actors to actually 'represent women' in the hearings. The results rather imply two conclusions. Firstly, that ensuring the gender balance of parliamentary standing committees may indeed contribute to the substantive representation of women, although perhaps not always only in the direct manner which is often ascribed to it. Secondly, that in considering future policy initiatives, it may not be the gender composition of the expert pool that should be in focus, but rather the substantive representation of women (the inclusion of women's group interests).

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents some results from a study on the inclusion and exclusion of women as experts in the parliamentary standing committee hearings in Finland. Its aim is to investigate the relations, problems and political implications linked to various conceptions of women's representation in the framework of expert and interest organisation hearings in parliamentary committees. Who represents women in parliamentary work and on which grounds? Is it the women called in as experts at large? Is it the women's organisations and interest groups, state equality agencies or academic gender researchers heard by the standing committees - are these consulted at all? Or, is it the women politicians or feminist MPs who make up part of the membership of the standing committees that are the 'representatives of women' in this important arena of decision-making?

Feminist scholarship (Hernes 1982, 1987; Haavio-Mannila et al. 1985; Bergqvist 1994; Bergqvist et al. 1999; Holli 2006, 2003) has pointed out that Nordic women's base of power tends to lie in democratic, elected bodies and, for example, the existence of some deliberative mechanisms such as committee preparation processes which have served to open them channels of access and influence (Holli 2003, 162). The closed labour market bargaining processes and various tripartite corporatist bodies acted as the main barriers (ibid.). Moreover, Holli (2006, 2003) pointed out in her comparative analysis of Finnish policy-making from 1969-1999 that Finnish women's internationally very high policy success in the parliamentary arena was very much achieved by their mutual various strategic alliances, including quite remarkable cross-party co-operation mechanisms established during the 1990s. Although women's interventions in the policy-making processes were most effective when directed at the early stages of the policy-making process, the high proportion of women MPs made sometimes also late interventions possible, especially during the investigation of governmental bills in parliamentary standing committees.

On the other hand, Finnish women's policy access was very much hindered by the fact that neither women nor women's organisations nor feminist researchers were on a regular basis included in the remittal mechanisms or the pools of experts utilised by various stages of the policy-making process (Holli 2003, 162). Women's exclusion was notable, for example, in policy deliberations on labour market policies, as well as in the expert hearings of parliamentary standing committees at large, during the whole period investigated. For instance, parliamentary standing committees did not seem to consult women's studies researchers even in regard to such 'women-related' issues as legislation concerning prostitution or violence against women.

This system of policy-making, with all its pros and cons, has since the mid-1990s been under a process of profound transformation which can be regarded to have an impact for the access and power of women as well as of other societal groups. Firstly, the preparation of legislation has been predominantly transferred to be done by specially nominated single-person ('single-man') state investigators instead of large and more representative commissions of inquiry (see e.g. Mattila 2000). There is also less use of remittals and hearings during policy preparation processes. These adjustments of the policy-making system were motivated with a demand for greater efficiency and speed in the decision-making processes, especially from the economic recession in Finland in the early 1990s onwards. Also the New Public Management reforms adopted within state and municipal administration have played an important role.

By contrast, simultaneously with the streamlining of the policy deliberation mechanisms, the normative framework ensuring citizens' participatory rights has been strengthened. The new Constitution of 1995 states that it is the responsibility of the state to promote individuals' opportunities to participate in societal activities and have an influence on decisions that pertain on

their interests (14 §). Moreover, the rights of children (6 §) and the Sami people to participate in decision-making processes were constitutionally confirmed.¹ However, there are no details in the constitutional law as to how the new obligations should be fulfilled. Pohjolainen (1999) points out that, for example, developing new legislation on participatory systems or introducing citizens' initiatives could be possible methods for implementing the statute. Indeed, various types of citizens' fora and internet open hearings on selected issues have been introduced in public policy-making especially during the 2000s to fulfill these goals (cf. also Rättälä 2001).

As far as women's participation is concerned, the Gender Equality Act of 1995 (modified 2005) ensures a numerical gender balance in most indirectly elected political and public bodies. The law regulates that governmental inquiry commissions, other similar bodies, municipal executive boards and other municipal boards and committees must be composed of at least 40 percent of women and men.² An additional clause from 2005 states that organisations asked to participate in committees should propose, when possible, the names of both a male and a female candidate for the post.

However, the quota rule of the Gender Equality Act does not pertain to selections made by the Parliament, such as the composition of parliamentary standing committees, or selections by the President. Neither is it applicable to the composition of expert pools. Moreover, it is doubtful whether the new constitutional statutes on participatory rights have had an impact on the 'normal' established mechanisms of consultation utilised by public policy-making, such as remittals and standing committee hearings. Rather, the 'new' deliberative mechanisms may work quite independently from the 'old' ones, with little interaction or mutual effect.

THE CONTEXT

Finnish parliamentary standing committees: tasks and composition

Since 2000, the Finnish Parliament (*Eduskunta* in Finnish) had 15 permanent standing committees: the Grand Committee (25 members) involved in the preparation of Finnish EU policy plus 14 specialised committees (17 members excepting the Committee for Finance which has 21 members). Since 2007, there was added a sixteenth committee, the new Audit Committee.

In the framework of their "obligation to prepare", the tasks of the standing committees consist of checking policy inputs, mainly governmental bills and parliamentary law initiatives (but also governmental reports (*selonteko*) and lower-level statutes and other issues) and giving *reports* to the parliamentary plenary on them for its decision-making as well as giving *statements* to other committees on issues under their preparation.³ Moreover, they regularly give admonishments to the government for future activity (included in reports to the plenary as "wishes"). The committees are also entitled to *receive a ministerial report* on issues under their jurisdiction and can give a statement to the cabinet or the ministry concerning them. Since 1990, the mandate of the specialised parliamentary committees mainly corresponds to the division of labour by the ministries. They also can arrange seminars or open hearings and yearly make visits to other countries to acquaint themselves with new ideas.

¹ Moreover, e.g. the new Local Government Act of 1995 and the new Construction Act of 1998 included instructions for involving citizens more in the policy deliberations.

² An additional clause decrees that there should be "a gender balance" (no numerical quota) in the decision-making bodies (in so far they are composed by political representatives) of state-owned companies in which the state or the municipality is the majority share-owner and in similar bodies exercising public power.

³ Note: the tasks of the Committee for Constitutional Law, the Grand Committee, the Committee for the Future and the Audit Committee are somewhat different from this general description.

In his comparative study of Nordic parliamentary committee systems, Hagevi (2000) evaluated the Swedish and Norwegian committees as the strongest in power; Finland was ranked as the second weakest before Denmark. However, today Finnish researchers tend to agree that the reconfiguration of constitutional powers has increased the powers of the parliamentary standing committees. The Finnish standing committees can and do modify governmental proposals; they can also reject them altogether (0,6 % of governmental proposals in 1999-2004). The proportion of modified bills has increased significantly during the last thirty years. In 1983, the parliamentary standing committees modified substantially only 17% of governmental proposals; in 1993, 44%; and in 2001, 48,3% (Portin 1988, 84; Helander & Pekonen 2007, 65-67). This trend has been regarded to illustrate the increased and more independent powers of the parliament and its committees in particular vis-à-vis the cabinet. On the other hand, it has also often been regarded as an unfortunate consequence of the increasingly worsening quality of the ministerial preparation of bills.

The membership of the individual standing committees mirrors the political composition of the parliament. Chairpersons' positions are divided in the negotiations between the parties. The selection of members to assigned committee seats is in practice the responsibility of the parliamentary party group. Typically, MPs indicate their preferences in writing, and the party leadership then adjusts these wishes with assigned seats. This division of committee seats is then confirmed formally by a voting in the parliamentary plenary. In the recruitment process, parliamentary seniority, hierarchical position within the party and gender play important roles (Forstén 2005). Mainly, all MPs who do not have pressing tasks in the leadership of the party, have at least two standing committee memberships proper (and vicememberships in other committees). (Forstén 2005)

Selection of committee experts: the criteria

The relevant information needed by the parliamentary committees for investigating legislative bills is accomplished by hearing experts on the issue at hand. This is however not absolutely obligatory, as the 37 § of the working regulations of the Parliament state that the committees "can hear" experts (Eduskunnan työjärjestys 7.12.1999/40 (2000)). In practice, however, experts are consulted to a varying degree in all core committee work, i.e. preparing reports and statements on legislative bills.

The hearings typically proceed by, firstly, consulting the representatives of the Ministry and other instances which were involved in the preparation of the bill. Secondly, the hearings can also involve academic experts or representatives of administration, associations or other instances that the issue concerns in particular or who are considered to have special expertise in the field. (Valiokuntaopas 2008.) In the guidelines only two groups are specifically mentioned to be given an opportunity to be heard in matters concerning them: the Sami people and the government of the autonomous province of Åland (Eduskunnan työjärjestys 2000; Valiokuntaopas 2008, 90).

There are few formal regulations concerning the selection criteria of experts or their quantity or quality. However, the committees have been admonished not to consult experts "too widely" in issues that do not deserve it; not to repeat the whole of the preparation process in their hearings; and to be restrained in their calling upon foreign experts. Moreover, only the representatives of public authorities have the obligation to be available to the parliamentary committee's call for expert consultation (Valiokuntaopas 2000, 41-42). Reasonable expert fees (as well as travelling expenses) can be paid to academic or other special experts, barring representatives of public authorities and civil society organisations and associations. (Valiokuntaopas 2008, 196; Valiokuntaopas 2000, 97).

Typically, the committee secretary and the chair play an important role in proposing an initial list of experts to be heard at the earliest stage of the process. The committee members can and do propose additional experts during various stages of the hearings, each "according to her/his interests" (e.g. Interview 11.06.08). MPs are thus able to promote interests seen as important to them by proposing experts that are ideologically or politically near their own convictions (Helander and Pekonen 2007).

The proposal and selection of experts is moreover structurally divided into "organisational and interest group experts" and "individual experts". Most often, the committee members propose that the committee would need to hear the viewpoint of some authority, organisation or interest group and, consequently, it sends an invitation to it. It is then up to that organisation to respond and select an expert among its personnel or cohorts. Alternatively, the committee can propose the name of an individual person, most often an academic expert, who is thought to have relevant knowledge on the issue.

According to the research interviews, the gender of experts has seldom been discussed or noted upon in the deliberations on experts. The procedure concerning the calling of organisational experts also makes this issue the internal affair of the organisations in question. The process also includes many internal, informal, criteria (see Holli & Saari 2009), for example, regarding the 'excellence' of experts. If during the first expert consultation the person in question fails to fulfill these, s/he will not be called upon again. (Interview 19.6.2008).

In sum, the composition of the expert pool is very much a result of mostly informal practices and rules which are partly similar, partly vary from one parliamentary committee to another.

THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Representation in the deliberative fora of the parliamentary standing committees

The parliamentary committee acts as a deliberative forum, performing its task of checking legislative bills by relying, on the one hand, on the deliberations by its assembly of members, and on the other, on information received from representatives of "relevant" instances, interests and bases of knowledge. Drawing from theories of deliberative and communicative democracy, the crucial questions become: Who are included, who are not? Who must be consulted as a matter of course, which groups are seen as sometimes possessing interests that are regarded as worth of attention in specific issues? What is seen as necessary knowledge to take into account in this arena of deliberating and decision-making? Which groups and interests are excluded and on which grounds? Which role do women, their interests and their representation play in this arena?

To represent, *repraesentere*, means basically "to make present something that is not in fact present" (Pitkin 1967, 92). The concept of representation has foremost been developed by Hanna Pitkin (1967) who mapped out four main types of representation theories, each partial in its view: 1) formalistic representation i.e. the authorization to act on behalf of another; 2) descriptive representation i.e. the correspondence of characteristics between the representative and the represented; 3) symbolic representation, referring to the the represented's feelings of being represented by somebody (e.g. the constitutional monarch); and 4) substantive representation i.e. acting for the interest of the represented. Although Pitkin herself favours substantive representation, that is, the activity and agency of the representative in acting for others as the most productive

viewpoint, she nevertheless emphasises the interconnecteness of the four forms of representation: they form part of an integrated whole. According to Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005), this tends to be forgotten in research on representation which tends to focus on one or two forms of representation only.

In feminist research, especially the question of descriptive and substantive representation and their relationship have been of special interest. Do women matter? Is there a relationship between their presence and proportion (descriptive representation) in a legislative assembly and the policy output and adoption of women-friendly policies (substantive representation)? The answers provided so far are partial and by no means clear-cut.

On the one hand, most scholars seem to agree that the inclusion of women, their presence (descriptive representation) in political decision-making is a necessary prerequisite for women's substantive representation to be possible at all (e.g. Phillips 1995, Young 2002). Jane Mansbridge (1999) has provided a theoretical basis for this viewpoint by arguing out the descriptive representation of disadvantaged groups, such as women or blacks, enhances, in addition to other democratic goods, their substantive representation by improving the quality of deliberations. That is, it improves the quality of communication and aids the articulation of previously uncrystallised interests by the disadvantaged groups. On the other hand, there have been much criticism against 'critical mass' theories which tend to assume that the number of women automatically affects the outcomes of policy-making. Instead, scholars point out, focus should be on 'critical acts' or 'critical actors' that matter more (e.g. Dahlerup 1988; Childs & Krook 2006). This point of critique also targets the assumption that all women automatically 'represent women' and their 'interests'. For example, Tremblay and Pelletier (2000) showed in their empirical analysis that to ensure the legislative success of women's concerns, a better strategy is to vote feminists (women or men) into the parliament that rely on 'women' (descriptive representation) only.

Recently, there have been some innovative viewpoints concerning the substantive representation of women which seem very useful also for our endeavour concerning the representation of women in parliamentary standing committees in Finland. Celis et al. (2008) criticise earlier research's narrow approach to the substantive representation of women in that, in their opinion, it tends to assume that women are the relevant actors; elected assemblies are the relevant sites; women's interests are the reason for women's activities; and that distinct policies reflecting 'women's interests' are the result of this activity. Instead, Celis et al. advocate a more comprehensive view of substantive representation by opening the concept to deal with questions such as: "Who claims to act for women" and "Where, why and how does the substantive representation of women occur?" Their aim is to avoid *a priori* assumptions about how things 'are' concerning women's representation and to promote a more 'problem-driven' empirical and theoretical approach to its study, which could produce new insights on the actors, fora, motives and methods of the political representation of women.

In a similar vein to Celis et al. (2008), Laurel S. Weldon (2002) has criticised the focus of research on individual legislators as sole representatives of women and advocated moving "beyond bodies" towards other, institutional, sources of representation for women. She proposes that the autonomous women's movement⁴ and women's policy agencies (i.e. gender equality agencies) are the crucial actors here that better represent women's collective voice and interests in the democratic process than relying on individual women MPs only. Also several other studies (first and foremost within the RINGS project, see e.g. McBride & Mazur 2006; Lovenduski et al. 2005; Outshoorn 2004)

⁴ On critique against the narrow definition of relevant women's organisations, which tends, for example in Finland, exclude the most important organisations, see Holli (2008).

point out the state feminist character (adoption and mediation of women's movement interests to the state) and the effectiveness of such agencies for women's policy success.

Weldon (2002, 1159) also draws attention to the fact that the institutional structures of public policy-making and administration are formed in a way that silently favours the substantive representation of historically dominant groups, while blocking and silencing the voice and interests of marginalised ones. According to her, an effective representation of women requires the articulation of a group perspective in relevant fora and processes. Weldon (ibid. 1158) concludes:

Marginalised groups, then, are poorly represented in most contemporary democratic policy processes because their perspectives are not equally reflected or considered in the policy process. Better substantive representation for these groups would provide mechanisms for the effective articulation of their distinctive perspective as a regular part of the policy processes, and would seek to eliminate barriers to the equal treatment of that perspective in policy deliberations.

Drawing from these ideas and criticisms, it is our intention here to apply theories of representation in order to investigate the relations, problems and political implications arising from various types of women's representation in the framework of expert and interest organisation hearings in the parliamentary committees. The fora to be studied are parts of the legislative assembly, but ones that have predominantly been studied only as to the activities of women MPs. In addition, we include the experts heard by the committees to the formula: do they represent women and if so, how? What are their possibilities and problems for doing that?

Notably, we study here the descriptive, substantive and academic, knowledge-based representation by focusing on women, women's organisations, women's policy agencies and women studies experts. This is not to say that men or, for example, representatives of some other organisations such as trade unions, could not *per se* represent women or their interests. Earlier research on Finnish policy-making processes has shown that it does happen, albeit much more rarely than by women or women's organisations (Holli 2003, 2006, 2008). Methodologically – at least at this stage of the study – it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pinpoint possibly relevant individuals or groups outside the ones chosen here that may have claims on representing women especially.

We will look, first, at the descriptive representation of women in the composition of the members of the parliamentary committees and in their pools of experts utilised. Secondly, we will look at the direct inclusion of women's substantive interests by targeting the interest representation by women's organisations and gender equality agencies in the committee expert hearings. Notably, the representation of organised interests bears in itself also the idea of formalistic representation: the representative does not only represent the organisation in the committee but is also its agent and trustee, which makes her/him accountable for her/his activities to it. A third group to be studied, not easily categorised in terms of representation, are the academic experts consulted in the committee hearings. They are often regarded as representatives of valid, objective, scientific knowledge on the issue at hand (e.g. Interview 1.10.08); not of specific groups (e.g. women or men) on the basis of their resemblance to them or their specific universities they come from or their interests. Rather, the academic experts represent a greater good, knowledge, which makes their representative function perhaps a form of virtual representation combined with some aspects of symbolic representation. What is the place of women's studies experts in the committee hearings and what is the value of gender-sensitive knowledge on women's lives?

Data and methods

The research material for this study consists, firstly, of information on experts utilised by the 15 parliamentary standing committees of the Parliament of Finland in 2005. Secondly, we also make use of the statistics produced by the Finnish Parliament itself of the work done in the parliamentary standing committees. Thirdly, we also have use of the questionnaires which included a query of gender researchers' societal activities that were collected as a part of the Research Assessment Exercise of Women's Studies in Finland (Bergman 2001). Finally, we interviewed 18 MPs and committee secretaries of three parliamentary standing committees (2008) to gain more in-depth data on the work and selection of experts of parliamentary committees.

The year 2005 was selected as a focus of this study as it was the second full year of the parliamentary cycle (2003–2007). The second year usually represents best the average parliamentary year. After the first (partial) year, a new parliament has started to function normally and the work load of the standing committees reaches an average level compared to fewer reports and statements during the first year and more than the average during the last year of the parliamentary cycle. Moreover, as the second year of the parliamentary cycle has also been utilised by previous research on parliamentary hearings (Helander & Pekonen 2007), this choice had the additional advantage for making some comparisons possible.

During the parliamentary year 2005, the standing committees gave 260 reports on governmental proposals and 340 statements to other standing committees (Eduskunnan kanslian toimintakertomus 2005, 14). The Parliament has its own quite extensive production of statistics which however does not include any systematic and updated lists or statistics about the experts heard by the standing committees. Therefore, there was no information about the gender and organisational background of the experts available. This data had to be gathered manually for our purposes. For this study, all the expert consultations (N=5187 consultations altogether, 4630 person consultations) by the 15 parliamentary standing committees were coded into a SPSS-database. This data was then analysed statistically (proportion of women and men as experts by standing committee, by sector; with a specific coding of the targeted groups (women's NGOs, gender equality agencies and women's studies experts).

A second database was created from the Research Assessment Exercise of Women's Studies in Finland that was commissioned by the Academy of Finland in 2001. The gender researchers that took part in the survey had also answered to a question about their societal activities. The Academy of Finland supplied the original survey forms (N=239) to be analysed by the study.

THE EMPIRICAL RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Descriptive representation of women: the women MPs in the committees

Between 2003-2007, of the 200 members of the parliament in Finland, 37.5% were women and 62.5% men. In 2005, of the 267 seats in standing committees, women occupied 37.1 % (99 seats) and men 62.9 % (168 seats). Since the 2007 parliamentary elections, there are 42% female MPs and 58% male MPs. In 2008, of the 284 standing committee seats, women occupied 39.4% (112 seats) and men 60.6% (172 seats). Table 1 shows how these seats were divided between the committees.

Table 1. Women members and vice-members in the standing committees (2005 and 2008).

Committee (all members/vice-members)	Women members 2005		Women members 2008		Women vice-members 2005		Women vice-members 2008	
	Tot.	%	Tot.	%	Tot.	%	Tot.	%
Social Affairs and Health (17/9)	9	52,9 %	11	64,7 %	9	100,0 %	5	55,6 %
Employment and Equality (17/9)	10	58,8 %	11	64,7 %	4	44,4 %	6	66,7 %
Environment (17/9)	8	47,1 %	10	58,8 %	1	11,1 %	4	44,4 %
Education and Culture (17/9)	11	64,7 %	9	52,9 %	4	44,4 %	3	33,3 %
Administration (17/9)	6	35,3 %	8	47,1 %	3	33,3 %	5	55,6 %
Legal Affairs (17/9)	7	41,2 %	8	47,1 %	4	44,4 %	5	55,6 %
Constitutional Law (17/9)	7	41,2 %	7	41,2 %	2	22,2 %	3	33,3 %
Commerce (17/9)	3	17,6 %	7	41,2 %	0	0,0 %	1	11,1 %
Committee for the Future (17/9)	6	35,3 %	6	35,3 %	4	44,4 %	5	55,6 %
Foreign Affairs (17/9)	8	47,1 %	6	35,3 %	4	44,4 %	2	22,2 %
Transport and Communications (17/9)	4	23,5 %	5	29,4 %	4	44,4 %	4	44,4 %
Defence (17/9)	2	11,8 %	5	29,4 %	1	11,1 %	2	22,2 %
Finance (21/19)	6	28,6 %	6	28,6 %	9	47,4 %	10	52,6 %
Grand Committee (25/13)	9	36,0 %	7	28,0 %	6	46,2 %	5	38,5 %
Agriculture and Forestry (17/9)	3	17,6 %	4	23,5 %	3	33,3 %	4	44,4 %
Audit Committee (17/9)			2	18,2 %			1	16,7 %
tot.women	99	37,1 %	112	39,4 %	58	38,9 %	65	41,1 %
tot. all	267	100,0 %	284	100,0 %	149	100,0 %	155	100,0 %

In a similar manner to Scandinavian results concerning the gender-segregated recruitment to standing committees (Bergqvist 1994; Wängnerud 1999) Timo Forstén (2005) in his longitudinal study of Finnish committee assignments between 1945 and 2002 pointed out their horizontal and vertical gender segregation. Horizontally, the Committees for Constitutional Law, Foreign Affairs and Finance have been very male-dominated – these are also the committees that tend to be regarded as the most prestigious in various committee rankings. Female MPs on the other hand have more likely been assigned to the Committee for Education and Culture and the Committee for Social Affairs and Health, generally considered to be dealing with "women's issues". (Ibid.)

Although in the context of their increasing numbers Finnish women MPs have gradually conquered access to all committees, the parliamentary standing committee system still basically displays a clear gender-segregated pattern (see Table 1), with two committees (Social Affairs and Health; Employment and Equality) having today (2009) more than 60% women, eight committees having less than 40 % women (some considerably less than that), and the rest (6 committees) having a gender balance (40-60 % both genders).

The vertical segregation on the other hand is visible in the selection of committee chairs: overall, over the period 1945-2002, male MPs were 2.5 times more likely than women to receive a committee chairmanship (Forstén 2005). In 2005, four out of the 15 committee chairs and five of the vice-chairs were women. Today, four of the 16 committee chairs and three of the 17 committee vice-chairs are women⁵.

According to the interviews, the gender composition of the standing committees has not been discussed in the Parliament, mostly because, as some interviewees saw it, its basic cause lies in the existing practices of the parliamentary party groups which make the actual selection of the members. The consequence, however, is that the committees tend to be very different as far as their gender profile is concerned. The gender composition of the committees, together with other relevant factors (such as the subject issue at hand, party and other organised interests in this particular area, established committee practices etc.) is however likely to enhance or hinder also women's substantive representation, for example, by increasing or limiting the diversity represented by the women MPs, making the committee arena more or less amenable for articulating women's interests (cf. Kanter 1977) and for construing the expert pool representing the relevant interests and knowledge to be included in the deliberations.

What, then, are the possibilities for women committee members to represent women apart from the fact that they "stand for" women by their very presence? Research has pointed out that Finnish women MPs sometimes also act for "women's interests" in the Parliament, that is, in their committee work or the plenary debates (Holli 2003, 2006). Moreover, some women MPs are active members or in leadership positions in their party's women's organisation or some other women's organisation, which gives them an explicit mandate as representatives of women's interests in a more substantive or formalistic sense as well (cf. Wängnerud 1999, 136-139).⁶ Also our interviews

⁵ Moreover, the bigger party groups nominate one of their representatives "the party responsible" in the committee, which is not a formal but nevertheless influential position. Our study pointed to a similar vertical gender segregation in these assignments (Holli & Saari 2009)

⁶ Lähteenmäki (2006, 204-205) however shows that women MPs of 1987-2003 had much more seldom leadership positions in the parties' women's organisations than the preceding generations of women MPs. Only 13% of them had such a background, whereas the figure for women MPs elected for the first time in 1945-65 was 71% and for those elected 1966-1986 43%. These figures clearly show changes in the careers of women MPs as well as the significance of women's political organisations for them. Instead, other types of networks may possibly be replacing them as providing constituencies of women.

revealed that many of the women MPs explicitly regarded themselves as representatives of women to some degree.

Women MPs in the parliamentary standing committees thus can, often claim to and indeed sometimes do represent women's interests. Formally, MPs only represent their party and geographical electoral district. In practice, MPs however both regard themselves and are regarded by their constituency as representatives of many additional groups and interests, which vary from one MP to another: a professional group, a disadvantaged social group perhaps, the elderly or proponents of children's welfare, women or men. It is precisely the openness of their mandate after being elected which makes also the substantive representation of women by women MPs possible – and sometimes factual.

The other side of the coin is that women MPs – as well as male MPs – indeed represent many groups and interests, which is bound to lead to conflicts between the interests represented and their mutual prioritization. The question whose viewpoints and which interests should be given priority in a specific issue becomes a matter of judgment. As far as women's interests are concerned, the result may depend either on personal convictions (feminism) and knowledge, the openness of the committee to giving room to expressing (or: listening to) viewpoints emphasising women's interests or information received or not received in the expert hearings during the reading of the bill in the parliamentary committee.

Descriptive representation of women: the women experts

The second source of women's descriptive representation available are the women experts who are consulted in the parliamentary committee hearings. Earlier studies on Finnish committee hearings have not paid any attention to the gender of the experts utilised. The only information available concerns the experts utilised by the Committee for Constitutional Law (Wiberg 2003, 983-4) between 1945 and 2002 which shows that women gradually entered as experts in this arena from the 1960s onwards, but that they still were a small, about twenty percent minority among its experts at the beginning of the 2000s.

Notably, the number of expert consultations has increased considerably during the last 40 years from which there is data available: in 1966, the committees consulted experts 600 times; in 1978 2107 times; and in 2001 3980 times (Helander & Pekonen 2007, 87-90). Our study reveals a further increase: in 2005, the standing committees consulted experts 5187 times, in average 8.6 consultations/issue. Partly, the increase is due to the increase of issues dealt with by the committees, but, as Helander and Pekonen (2007, 91) point out, the use of experts by standing committees has increased beyond its impact.

In 2005, of the 4630 person consultations⁷, 1570 (33,9 %) were with female experts and 3060 consultations (66,1 %) with male experts.. In sum, of all the consultation every third was given by a woman. Male experts were consulted appr. 5,1 times/issuet and female experts appr. 2,6 times/issue. Looking at the distribution of experts by committee, the gendered segregation of expertise, reminiscent of the one found in the gender composition of committees, becomes visible.

⁷ The difference between these figures relates to the fact that some organisations sent their expert statements in writing, signing them only by the name of the organisation. "Person consultations" consist of either persons coming to the committee physically or of those written expert statements signed by a person representing the organisation.

Table 2. Consultations by women experts in the standing committees 2005.

Committee	Consultations tot.	Consultations by women	
		N	%
Social Affairs and Health	411	228	55,5
Employment and Equality	351	149	42,5
Environment	332	136	41,0
Education and Culture	382	154	40,3
Foreign Affairs	134	55	41,0
Future	39	14	35,9
Agriculture and Forestry	282	98	34,8
Administration	511	167	32,7
Commerce	343	107	31,2
Grand Committee	29	9	31,0
Legal Affairs	349	102	29,2
Finance	602	179	29,7
Transport and Communications	403	93	23,1
Constitutional Law	381	69	18,1
Defence	81	10	12,3
ALL	4630	1570	33,9

Women experts were in a slight majority only among the experts utilised by the Committee for Social Affairs and Health. In all the other standing committees, female experts were in a minority. The most gender balanced division of experts existed in the following standing committees: Employment and Equality, Environment, Education and Culture and Foreign Affairs. Of these, the Committee for Foreign Affairs and the Committee for Environment are however not regarded as traditionally female-dominated arenas of expertise and decision-making. In all the remaining standing committees, women experts made up less than 40 % of the consultations.

In Table 3, consultations with women experts were classified by the sector they represented. The largest category (53,4%) of the consultations was with the public sector. Of its consultations, 38,0 % were given by women. The public sector was also the most gender-balanced category of experts in our analysis. This is not surprising *per se* since women are becoming the majority of employees in most ministries. Indeed, of the expert consultations by the ministries, 43,3 % (a higher proportion than the public sector in average) were by women in our data. Also in the municipal sector women constitute appr. 80 % of the work force. However, they are still in a minority in the top positions of both state and municipal administration and the various branches are still strongly segregated by gender.

Table 3. Expert consultations by sector and the proportion of consultations by women experts

	Number of consultations	Of all consultations	Consultations by women experts	
Public sector	2770	53,4 %	963	38,0 %
Private sector	204	3,9 %	40	20,9 %
Civil society	1608	31,0 %	465	35,4 %
Research and education	587	11,3 %	98	17,0 %
Other	18	0,3 %	4	23,5 %
ALL	5187	100,0 %	1570 (N=4630)	33,9 %

Public sector: includes civil servants in ministries and in the Parliament, other state offices, municipalities, other public organisations and ministers and politicians.

Private sector: private companies.

Civil society: NGO's, labour market organisations and the state churches.

Research and education: experts from universities, research institutes and other educational institutions.

Other: experts who did not fit to any of the previous categories, for example, representatives of different kinds of delegations.

The category "civil society" is the second most equal category: 35,4 % of the expert consultations in this group were by women experts. However, the size of the gender gap varies by sub-category as do the sizes of these sub-categories. For example, in 202 out of 625 (32,3 %) of the consultations with labour market organisations the organisational expert was female; a figure that almost equals women's average share of expert consultations. By contrary, of the experts representing the state churches and religious groups (n=22) only three (13.6%) were women (see next chapter).

The private sector can be ranked as the third as far as the proportion of women experts is concerned with its considerably smaller share of women experts (20,9%). Many on the private sector experts consulted were in the top leadership of their companies. Therefore, the smaller share of expert consultations by women in this sector also reflects the real life situation of Finnish companies in which less than 10 % of the chief executive officers and less than 25 % of the board members are women (Kotiranta, Kovalainen & Petri Rouvinen 2007).

Research and education was the weakest category in the proportion of women experts. In 2005 the standing committees heard 575 times (12,4% of person consultations (N=4630); 11,3% of all consultations (N=5187)) experts from academic and research institutions as well as other educational institutions. Of these, 83,0 % were by male experts and 17,0 % by female experts. 367 (65,4 %) of the consultations in this category were with experts having a professor's rank. Notably 80 % of persons in this academic category tend to be male. This vertical segregation in the academia in part explains why the majority of academic experts consulted are male, but only in part.

In order to investigate the gender segregation of academic experts more in-depth, we analysed the Parliament's own statistics of the 264 expert fees paid in 2005 (Hallintojohtajan hyväksymät asiantuntijapalkkiolaskut 28.4.05; 22.3.05; 10.6.05; 7.10.05; 26.10.05; 23.11.05). The data revealed both a gendered pay gap and the fact that only some, mostly male experts are remunerated for their

expert work in the standing committees, suggesting that there exist gender hierarchies in the status of the experts.

According to the Parliament's statistics, expert fees are in practice paid only to academic experts, with a few exceptions (for example, fees to ex-ministers when they are consulted in the standing committees). In 2005, the total amount of euros paid to men was 133 270 euros, to women 12 330 euros. A male academic expert heard by the standing committee earned appr. 560 euros per consultation; a female academic expert earned appr. 474 euros per consultation - a woman thus earned appr. 85 % of the male wages. From the 264 expert fees, 238 (90,2 %) were paid to male experts and 26 (9,8 %) to female experts. The top ten most consulted academic experts (with fees paid to them) were all men except for one woman who was also the only non-professor of this group. These top ten experts were all lawyers and their fees came up to 69% of all the expert fees paid in 2005. Of the paid expert consultations, 183 (69,3 %) were for consultations by the Committee for Constitutional Law; 91,8 % of these were by a male expert. The second committee with the most paid consultations was the Committee for Legal Affairs (34 fees, 12,9 % of all the fees). Of them, fees were paid to 5 women compared with 29 men. In the Committee for Administration there were 26 paid consultations (9,8 % of all the paid consultations), none with a female paid expert.

On the basis of these results, specialised legal expertise (especially in constitutional law) is the most appreciated form of expertise, also in financial terms, by the parliamentary standing committees. Women are a tiny minority among this professional group, which is also reflected in their number of consultations and fees paid. However, the standing committees also utilise other types of academic expertise, which is for some reason not equally remunerated, though. For example, from the 264 paid consultations, only seven were with political scientists.

In conclusion, although women make up a third of the experts heard by the standing committees, their proportion and status varies depending on the committee and area of expertise. The question to be addressed is, what are the possibilities of women experts, although 'standing for women' by their presence, represent women and their concerns in a more substantive manner?

The majority of experts heard by the committees are representatives of a public authority, an interest organisation or a private company. As such, their role is that of agents representing their background organisation, charged with the task of informing the committee of relevant viewpoints and group interests to be taken into account in the preparation of reports and statements on legislative matters. Their mandate is thus restricted to performing this task of formalistic representation in a satisfactory manner. They are also accountable for their background organisation for possible breaches of this trusteeship.

From the viewpoint of women's representation, the restricted mandate of women experts prevents them taking on 'additional tasks' such as the substantive representation of women. Whatever the private opinions of a woman expert might be, she cannot easily extend herself to 'representing women's concerns' unless her organisation has given a more or less explicit mandate for it – it would be considered a breach of the boundaries of the expert mandate both by the expert herself and her organisation. An explicit mandate to advocate women's concerns tends only be given by women's interest organisations, or state gender equality agencies, to their representatives. Although all public authorities and most of the other societal actors also have by law the responsibility to promote gender equality in their activities, in practice this task remains very much unobserved. For women experts willing to advocate women's concerns or viewpoints as well, the most available

strategy is to work within their organisations to ensure that the mandate of representation will be widened to include also gender-sensitive issues.

Compared with these organisational experts' limited mandate, the mandate of academic experts is more open and independent. They are not accountable for their viewpoints or activity to any background organisation in the sense of formalistic representation. In theory, academics can include in their expert views any kind of information they consider valid and relevant to the issue at hand – including also gender-sensitive knowledge. In the same manner than with organisations at large, mainstream scholars however seldom possess or mediate such knowledge. In this instance, despite the openness of possibilities for women's substantive representation, the limits to 'valid and relevant knowledge' become the barrier.

Consequently, the descriptive representation of women by women experts does not easily turn into substantive representation as there are many insurmountable barriers, different for experts with different backgrounds and roles. Women's interest organisations, gender equality agencies and women studies scholars emerge from this discussion as the most capable for women's substantive representation, as they are not limited by the same barriers to the same degree. These three groups of actors will be analysed in more detail in the following sections.

Substantive representation of women: the women's NGOs

In 2005, various types of NGOs were consulted by the parliamentary standing committees 1315 times, that is, they make up 28.4 % of all experts (N=4630) heard. The largest group was *labour market organisations*, comprised of both trade unions and employers' organisations (ie. those organisations with negotiation rights in labour market agreements): they made up 47.5 % of all consultations with non-governmental organisations. The next largest group in the expert hearings. (46.4%) was what we have here called "*other associations*", made up by general interest organisations, for example, social and health organisations. Of that large group, especially the Association of Finnish Municipalities (Suomen Kuntaliitto) representing the interests of the regional and local authorities had a prominent position (109 consultations, 8.3% of all NGO consultations) (cf. also Helander & Pekonen 2007, 92). (See Table 4)

Associations representing various minorities or other protected group rights comprise 6.1% of the consultations by civil society.⁸ Of these, various groups representing young people and students were consulted most often (2.6%), followed far behind by the churches and religious groups (1.7%), associations for the disabled (1.1%) and women's associations (0.5%). Ethnic and sexual minorities, religious associations (other than the state churches), and the elderly people's associations were consulted extremely seldom by the parliamentary standing committees; the men's associations not even once.

⁸ Notably, should we exclude the state churches from this figure, it would be even lower.

Table 4: Consultations by civil society and the number and proportion of women experts

	Number of consultations	% of all consultations by civil society	Number of consultations by women experts	Women experts as a percentage (%) of the organisation's expert hearings
Labour market organizations	625	47.5	202	32.3
Churches and religious associations	22	1.7	3	13.6
Ethnic and language minority associations	1	0.1	0	0
Women's associations	6	0.5	6	100
Men's associations	-	-	-	-
Gay and lesbian rights associations	1	0.1	1	100
Associations for the disabled	15	1.1	8	53.3
Associations for the elderly	1	0.1	1	100
Youth and students' associations	34	2.6	17	47.2
Other associations	610	46.3	227	37.2
ALL	1315	100	465	35.4

All in all, four separate women's organisations were consulted in 2005, together six times (0.12% of all consultations (N=5187)). The Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations (NYTKIS, 600 000 members) and the Central Organisation of Women Entrepreneurs (80 local chapters with individual members each) were consulted twice; and the National Council of Women in Finland (500 000 members) and the immigrant women's organisation Monika-Naiset (about 50 members) once each. Each of their representatives was a woman, typically, their General Secretary. Two of the consultations dealt with receiving information concerning the reform of the Gender Equality Act which was under reading in the Committee for Employment and Equality in 2005. The remaining four consultations concerned governmental annual reports on the situation of the labour market, population, and governmental proposals concerning arbitration of crimes and the integration of immigrants into Finnish society.

In sum, of the 600 reports and statements submitted in 2005 by the parliamentary standing committees, women's organisations were thus consulted in preparing five matters, 0.8% of them. Five of the expert consultations with women's organisations occurred by the same committee, that is the Committee for Employment and Equality (in 17.9% of all its matters, 1.7 % of its experts). The Committee for Legal Affairs consulted a women's organisation once. The remaining 13 parliamentary standing committees did not consider the representation of women's organisations of any kind relevant or necessary to the issues they deliberated upon – regardless of various international, national and legal commitments to ensuring women's equal participation in all decision-making and the implementation of gender mainstreaming, for whose success, the inclusion

of the disadvantaged group's voice is often considered a necessary prerequisite (see e.g. Squires 2005).

Direct, organisational representation of women's substantive interests as measured by the consultation of women's associations is thus extremely rare in the expert hearings of the parliamentary committees. Moreover, it tends to be restricted to one committee only, which, in addition to being one of the two committees with a female majority of membership, is by mandate formally in charge of gender equality issues. In structural terms, it also means that the access and influence of women's organisations in parliamentary expert hearings is very limited.

For the women's NGOs, this means that in order to make a policy impact, they have to rely on lobbying preferably in the earlier stages of public policy-making, that is, the preparation of laws in inquiry commissions or ministries. This has also been shown to be the most effective strategy overall (Holli 2003, 2006). However, if women's concerns were excluded also in the earlier stages of the policy-making process, the institutionalised exclusion of women's group perspectives in the parliamentary expert hearings easily leads to their total disregard at all the stages of the process.⁹ Should this be the case, for women's associations the most available strategies seem to be to rely on indirect representation: to bring their concerns to either women's policy agencies' or women MPs' attention¹⁰ and hope that they will act for women's expressed group interests (cf. Holli 2003, 2006). In this manner, the scarcity and exclusion of women's substantive representation may actually force them to deploy strategies relying also on the descriptive representation of women, strengthening its significance for policy outcomes.

Substantive representation of women: the gender equality agencies

In the state administration, there are three different gender equality agencies which share responsibility for various aspects of policy-making in gender equality matters. The Gender Equality Unit in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (TASY) is responsible for the coordination of the Government's gender equality policies; the Gender Equality Ombudsman (TAS) is the legislative branch in charge of monitoring the Gender Equality Act, and the Council for Gender Equality (TANE) is a political, advisory organ. According to a recent study (Holli & Kantola 2007), the TASY is the most powerful, although restricted by its mandate as the spokesperson for the Government. The two other agencies, although less influential, are regarded as being capable of expressing more critical viewpoints in the policy-making than the TASY. The TANE, the weakest of these agencies institutionally, has however the widest institutionalised contact base with various women's organisations. (Ibid.)

Earlier studies on Finnish women's organisations and the role of gender equality agencies have pointed out the significance of strategic alliances between them: the agencies used to effectively mediate women's movement demands into the policy process in a manner testifying to their 'state feminist' character (Holli 2003, 2006). The reconfiguration of both the field of women's organisations and gender equality agencies during the 1990s and early 2000s however changed this co-operation, in that new types of women's political cross-party networks (NYTKIS, Women MPs' Network in Parliament) partly discarded such indirect representation via gender equality agencies and started to play more prominent direct roles in policy-making processes (Holli 2003, 2006; Aalto & Holli 2007).

⁹ See also Holli and Saari 2009 on the principles of organisational selection by the parliamentary standing committees.

¹⁰ A strategy reminding of surrogate representation, see Mansbridge 1999.

Here, it is out of the scope of our study to measure the actual 'state feminism' of the gender equality agencies in the committee expert hearings. Referring to the results mentioned above as indicative of their potential to represent and mediate the viewpoints of women's organisations into the policy process, instead, we investigate the consultation of these agencies in the parliamentary committee hearings in 2005.

Overall, state gender equality agencies were consulted 12 times by the parliamentary standing committees, making up 0.5 % of all the consultations by the public sector, 0.23% of all consultations total (N=5187). 10 of their representatives (84%) were women, two men (16 %).

The Ombudsman and the TANE were both consulted twice; all their expert consultations were by the Committee for Employment and Equality and concerned the reform of the Gender Equality Act. By contrast, the Gender Equality Unit (TASY) was consulted 8 times. Its role was also more inclusive: although the Committee for Employment and Equality was the main forum for consultations (5 times), the agency was also consulted by the Committee for Social and Health Affairs and the Committee for Finance. Only two of the consultations dealt with the reform of the Gender Equality Act. The TASY was also consulted in other matters concerning, for example, the preparation of the agenda for Finnish EU presidency, the Lisbon strategy and various budgetary matters.

Of the 600 reports and statements submitted by the parliamentary standing committees in 2005, gender equality agencies were consulted as experts in eight matters (1.3% of all issues). The results show that gender equality agencies tend to suffer from the same problems than the women's associations which represent women's substantive, group interests in a more direct manner. The gender equality agencies are consulted but seldom; and their participation tends to be limited mostly to one committee and specific 'gender equality issues' only.

The Gender Equality Unit differs from this picture slightly, in that its role is marginally more inclusive. As far as women's representation is concerned, its institutional mandate is however more dual: it both defends gender equality and the improvement of women's (and men's) societal position and the Government's past, present and future activities, two objectives that may not always be totally in line with each other. Moreover, the scarcity and limited scope of expert consultations with gender equality institutions do not predict well for a successful implementation of gender mainstreaming either.

Representation by women's studies experts

In Finland, the first courses in women's studies in universities were held in the 1980's and women's studies as an academic discipline was institutionalized during the 1990's. Even though women's studies as an academic discipline is rather young, there is a long tradition of gender equality research in Finland from the 1960's onwards.

In the pool of academic experts heard by the standing committees in 2005 we¹¹ were able to identify 20 consultations given by researchers with some experience in gender research. Their expert consultations comprised 3.6% (20/561) of the consultations with the academic experts (academic expertise separated from other educational institutions) (0.4 % of all expert consultations (N=4630).

¹¹ We thank Researcher Liisa Husu and Academy Professor Kevät Nousiainen for their kind assistance in identifying experts who have done some gender research at some stage in their careers, in our database.

Experts in women's studies were heard by the following standing committees: Committee for Employment and Equality (6 times), Committee for Legal Affairs (4 times), Committee for Constitutional Law (3 times), Committee for Social Affairs and Health and Committee for Agriculture and Forestry (2 times), Committee for the Future, Committee for Administration and Committee for Commerce, one consultation each. Expertise in women's studies was sought in matters concerning gender equality legislation (4 times), the arbitration of crimes and prison laws (4 times), medicinal law (2 times) and laws concerning the safety of products (2 times). The rest of these consultations (one each) varied, including the establishment of the EU Gender Institute, EU legislation, population issues, working life, pensions, other social affairs issues and immigration issues.

On the other hand, it is not self-evident that there is a pool of gender expertise available and just waiting to be utilised if only parliamentarians showed some interest in this base of knowledge. In order to investigate this question more closely, we triangulated our data to look into the societal activities that gender experts themselves engage in. The aim was to check whether gender researchers really are as excluded from the political decision-making processes as our data from 2005 suggests, or whether they are included in the decision-making processes in other arenas instead. Unfortunately, the nature of the quantitative research data did not allow us to examine whether the exclusion is by the gender experts' own choice or whether it is consequence of an ignorance of the civil servants and politicians responsible for fulfilling the decision-making and expert posts.

The data consisted of the questionnaires which were collected as a part of the Research Assessment Exercise of Women's Studies in Finland (Bergman 2001) and which included an open question on the gender researchers' societal activities over the period of the preceding seven years (1995-2001). We divided the answers into three categories of main interest to us: 1) activities as experts within the public sector nationally (expert positions in governmental committees or working groups, expert hearings and board memberships in public bodies); 2) societal activities in a more comprehensive, general sense (giving lectures to politicians or civil servants, making reports for ministries and acting as consultants for politicians or the president in a more personal capacity), and 3) expert positions in international organisations like the European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN) or the OECD.

Of the 239 women's studies researchers that had filled in the questionnaire¹², 23 persons (9.6 %) had performed as experts within the public sector; 22 persons (9.2 %) had had some societal activities in a more general sense, and 19 persons (7.9 %) had acted as experts internationally in the context of the European Union, the United Nations or the OECD. Altogether 64 persons (26.8 % of all) mentioned social activity belonging to some of these categories. Only one however reported having being heard as expert in a parliamentary standing committee.

Over a half of the gender researchers had had some kind of societal activities, but they had mostly occurred outside of the traditional political and governmental institutions targeted above (for example, memberships in scientific organizations, NGO's etc.)¹³. Notably, however, as many as 69 gender researchers (29 %) had left the question unanswered. We cannot tell whether these

¹² In the Research Assessment Exercise of Women's Studies 13 questionnaires were left out of the exercise. We also left them out from our analysis after we checked that they had no relevant information for our research purposes. These 13 questionnaires did not include any societal activities that could have been analysed according to our three analytical categories.

¹³ Even when the researchers mentioned activities inside the traditional institutions, the answers were sometimes given in such an unspecified manner that we were not able to classify them. into any of the analytical groups.

researchers did not have any societal activities, whether they did not wish to share them in a context of an academic evaluation exercise or whether they considered the question inappropriate altogether (for example, one researcher said: "I do not regard my societal activities as part of my scholarly work").

Together, these two sources of data testify to the fact that knowledge provided by women's studies is not very much utilised in public decision-making in Finland, such as the standing committee hearings. Although women's studies scholars (as they were defined here) made up the most consulted group of the three targeted groups of actors, it should also be noted that only two persons in our data were explicitly recognised as experts in gender knowledge (women's studies) by the committee. Regarding the rest of the scholars consulted, it remains an open question whether it was their 'mainstream' expertise in social policy, medicine etc. or in gender studies which was actually sought for by the committees. Notably, the open nature of the scientific expert's role does not make it problematic to combine these roles and include information concerning the gendered nature of women's and men's lives as well in their expert statements.

Conclusion

In this study, we have analysed the representation of women in the parliamentary standing committee hearings of 2005, with an emphasis on the barriers and possibilities of various groups of actors in this forum to substantively represent women.

As far as the descriptive representation of women is concerned, the results showed a horizontal gender segregation in committees and experts. The inclusion of women experts, making up in average 33.9% of the expertise utilised, reflected to some degree also the gendered segregation of the committees: the committees with most women MPs also utilised women experts most, the committees with the highest proportion of men tended to utilise women experts least. To a great part, this may be a result of the gendered organisation of labour in society at large. The observation however also raises questions of the impact of the internal, gendered, practices of the committees themselves, in that they wield considerable independent powers in deciding whom to consult.

The significance of 'female bodies' representing women was relativised in the paper by pointing out the different opportunities by women MPs and women experts to substantively represent women in the hearings. The former can and do sometimes represent women substantively, thanks to their relatively open mandate, although there may arise other types of problems for doing so. Women experts on the other hand for the most part have a restricted mandate to represent an authority, organisation or other instance in the hearings. As a category of agents, they cannot easily represent women in a more substantive sense without overstepping the boundaries of their role unless the organisation in question has given a mandate for it. This observation also points to the importance of having women's substantive, organised group interests included in political decision-making in a more explicit manner.

The substantive representation of women was measured by the inclusion of women's associations, gender equality agencies and women's studies experts in the hearings. The results indicate that they are seldom given a voice in the committee hearings. Of these, women's studies scholars were consulted most often (0.43% of all person consultations (N=4630); gender equality agencies next (0.26%); and women's NGOs the least consulted group (0.13%). Together, these actors of women's substantive interests comprised 0.8% (38 times) of all expert consultations. Of the issues dealt with by the committees in 2005, 22 different matters (3.7%) were deemed to need some form of women's substantive representation. Notably, the inclusion of these gendered interests very much

concentrated in one committee, that is, the Committee for Employment and Equality, and one issue, the reform of the Gender Equality Act (12 consultations out of a total of 38). The results also tell us that the representation of women's group interests was not deemed necessary by most of the other parliamentary standing committees at any stage when they dealt with the other 578 issues (96.3%) in their legislative workload.

The results of our investigation thus indicate that the substantive representation of women tends to be structurally very much excluded from the committee expert hearings. This may actually have the consequence of forcing the women's associations, with the most explicit mandate to represent women's organised interests, to attempt an inclusion of their concerns via other channels, such as the gender equality agencies or sympathetic women MPs. The latter strategy takes us back to questions concerning descriptive representation and its problems, most notably, the fact that it is not only the quantity of women that matters, but also what they do and whom they are willing and able to act for.

Feminist scholars have served to raise many important questions concerning the descriptive and substantive representation of women and the link between the two. In this study, we on our part have attempted to show that the descriptive and substantive representation of women, as well as the other forms of representation, are indeed interconnected in multifaceted ways. On the other hand, the results of our investigation also raise the query whether measures improving women's descriptive representation (e.g. increasing the proportion of women in the pool of experts at large) have actually any impact at all on improving their substantive representation in a context of the parliamentary standing committee hearings. The results of this study rather imply two things. Firstly, that ensuring the gender balance of parliamentary standing committees might indeed also contribute to the substantive representation of women, although perhaps not always only in the direct manner that is often ascribed to it. Second, that in considering future policy initiatives, the substantive representation of women (the inclusion of women's group interests) should be in focus. This observation, if anything, is bound to raise hackles among Finnish feminists, and women politicians in particular, as it questions the strategy of "adding women" which has been the unquestioned credo for decades.

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