

GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

Statsvetenskapliga Institutionen

Challenges to the Politics of Presence

- A case study on the council of Windhoek

Magisteruppsats i Statsvetenskap

VT 2010

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Acknowledgements

I first and foremost would like to thank my supervisor Lena Wängnerud. Thank you for your support and for sharing your deep knowledge on the politics of presence during this process.

I would also like to thank the councilors who participated in this study and the people working in the municipal of Windhoek for assisting me therefore made this thesis possible. My last, but not least, acknowledgement goes out to Johanna. Thank you for your encouragement during the time I was writing this paper.

Göteborg, March 2010

Abstract

This is a theory developing thesis that intends to contribute to the politics of presence theory. The politics of presence is a theory on what happens when women enters the political arena. In short the politics of presence tells us that if the number of women increases in political assemblies, the agenda is most likely transformed and issues linked to social services increases. The politics of presence also shows that there will be some form of road blocks that prevents the women from transforming the agenda. Such road blocks could be that the women are excluded from the debate, the men keep holding on to the influential seats in the assembly and the institutions are created in such a way that they favour the men. Most of the research within this theory is done in western liberal democracies which have led to an unexplored field when it comes to developing countries. This case study have examined if the women in the council of Windhoek have transformed the agenda and what sort of road blocks they have faced. The result showed that they have not transformed the agenda and the main reason for this is because there is a high level of centralization in Namibia. Due to this high level of centralization, the local council holds a small budget and is only allowed to decide in a few issues and none of these are directly related to issues that are considered “typically” female.

Key words: Namibia, Windhoek, the politics of presence, challenges, road blocks, critical mass

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Abbreviations

CEO	<i>Chief Executive Office.</i> The management of the Local Authority that is responsible for policy implementation etc.
CLGF	<i>Commonwealth Local Government Forum</i>
DTA	<i>Democratic Turnhalle Alliance.</i> A political party in Namibia. They hold one chair in the council of Windhoek.
GDP	<i>Gross Domestic Product</i>
Swapo	<i>South West Africa People's Organization.</i> Swapo is by far largest party of Namibia. They received about 75 % of the vote for the National Assembly and hold 10 out of 15 chairs in the council of Windhoek.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Politics of Presence

For a long time women have been excluded from politics. The political arena has been considered as a strictly male domain, where women in general, have had a very limited chance to enter. Luckily this way of thinking is slowly about to change. In recent years the number of women in politics has been steadily increasing¹. As the number of women increase so does the interest to see what affect, if any, this has on the politics carried out. Does an increase of women affect the actual politics once they are allowed into the assemblies where there used to be only men, or is politics a gender neutral area? A short answer to this question is a no; the political arena is not gender neutral.

When women enter a political assembly, extensive research shows that the political outcome changes as well. For example, research shows that the representatives of a certain group tend to handle and care about issues that regards this group more than what a non-member would do². For instance, Burden did research in the US House of Representatives and gave support to the theory that members of one group more often highlights this specific group's dilemma³. Further on, Wängnerud has shown that female legislators in Sweden are more likely than men to prioritize topics like elder care, family policy and health care⁴. As we can see, the possibility for a transformed agenda increases as the balance of a group, for instance the members of a political body, is changed. This phenomenon is called the *politics of presence*.

If we break down the term politics of presence we will find some interesting parts that need a further explanation. One of these is how many women, or other members of a group that has been marginalized from a deciding body, that is needed in order to transform an agenda. Research shows that the number varies from 10% to 40 but the most common number that is mentioned amongst scholars is that 30 % of the elected has to be (for instance) women in order to see an agenda with a female influence^{5 6}. This matter will be discussed in chapter 2.1

¹ Wängnerud (2009) p 52

² Mansbridge (2005) p 624

³ Mansbridge (2005) p 625

⁴ Wängnerud (1999)

⁵ Grey (2006)

⁶ Paxton, Hughes (2007)

1.2 Road Blocks and the matter of context

Women (or other groups that has been marginalized for that matter) who enter the political area and try to change the agenda are often seen as threat to the status quo and will therefore meet some form of opposition⁷. Examples of such road blocks can be an exclusion from the debate, that the men continues to occupy the influential seats in a council/assembly or that the councils “work hours” are created from a man’s point of view.

Being a woman in politics is of course different depending of which context you are active in. All though these problems might have a similar pattern all over the world, it is highly likely to assume that a woman who want to engage in politics in Scandinavia, is less likely to have a problematic time than a female politician based in a region with less experience of such⁸. Supporting this theory, one particular study showed Sweden to be the country where most people considered women to be as good as men when it came to handling politics. The Namibian neighbor state South Africa along with Poland and Estonia were at the opposite end of the chart⁹. On the other hand, research done by Inter-Parliamentarian Union, an international organization of parliaments worldwide, shows that 76% of the women who participated in a worldwide survey felt that prejudice about the female gender limits the participation of women in politics, prejudices that often create emotional barriers for women to be a part of the formal politics¹⁰.

When it comes to studies regarding road blocks the greater part of the research are focusing on western liberal democracies¹¹. There is little research done on democracies in developing countries and, as far as I know, none done on Namibia, this young state who just got out of its teenage years¹². This makes it a lot more interesting, but also of course a bit more difficult since the research in this area is to be considered as a scare resource.

In Namibia the women are tied up to so-called “traditional” roles. A traditional role could for example be that the women have to do all the domestic work and are not to worry about such things as politics. Namibia is considered to be a democratic developing country and the poverty that comes with this prevents the women from breaking up with this^{13 14}. This

⁷ Stevens (2007) p 179

⁸ With a the risk of being a bit hypocritical, female politicians in the Nordic countries are still facing criticism for engaging in politics when they, according to their critics, should stay at home raising their children. The Swedish parliamentarian Birgitta Olhsson (Folkpartiet Liberalerna “Peoples Party The Liberals”) was criticized by her parliamentarian colleague Kjell Eldensjö, (Kristdemokraterna “Christian Democratic Party”) for accepting the post as Swedish minister for EU-affairs because she was expecting a child. (Expressen 2010-02-04)

⁹ Paxton, et al (2003) p 100

¹⁰ Paxton, Hughes (2007) p 108

¹¹ Stevens (2007) p 176

¹² Namibia became independent in 1989

¹³ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Namibia p 18

traditional view on women leads to a discrimination that can be seen in most sectors of the Namibia society. Therefore is highly likely to assume that discrimination towards women can also be seen in the area of politics and more specific the council of Windhoek.

What is interesting to investigate is what kind of road blocks the women in Windhoek are facing. Since there is very little research done on development countries we can then ask ourselves what do we really know about the situation for women active in politics and are based in young democratic states like Namibia?

1.3 Research problem

My research problem for this paper will be what sort of female influence in the presented politics that is carried out by the Municipal Council of Windhoek, Namibia and what sort of hindrance these women might face.

The council consists of 40% women (6 of 15) and according to Swedish measures a council that is to be considered as an equal one¹⁵. This is important due to the fact that there then should, according to the politics of presence theory, be an agenda with an influence of women. Further on, it is highly likely to assume that there will also be some form of road blocks that prevent, or tries to prevent, the women from transforming the agenda.

There are still some areas regarding potential road blocks that are not yet fully explored. I will have the focus on what I believe is missing in the literature today and that is the mandate and structure of the council. What is not yet fully researched is the affect of not having a council with a strong mandate that is structured in such a way that it could deny the elected women of having an influence on the agenda.

¹⁴ Namibia is according to Freedom House considered a “free” country.

¹⁵ SCB (2008) p 65

2 Challenges to the politics of presence

2.1 The Critical Mass

As already mentioned could an increase of women in a political body can transform the agenda and add issues that before has been ignored. But then the question of how many women that is needed in order for the agenda to be changed arises. How large part of a council/ parliament has to consist of women before we can see a difference in the politics?

The greater part of literature today considers reaching a so-called “critical mass” as crucial for getting a chance to influence the agenda¹⁶. If the women are too few then they are then considered to be token women¹⁷. Token means that the women in an assembly are working on the behalf of another person who decides what she should vote for, or believes that they have to blend in to the male culture in order to be seen or heard. This sort of phenomenon tends to disappear when the women are reaching a higher number and will and, for example, not longer suffer from stereotyping¹⁸.

But how many women does it take to create a critical mass? In research today, there is a debate about who many women that are needed in order to make a difference, the most mentioned number is 30 %^{19 20 21 22}. When reaching 30% the women would then not be seen as a threat, they could form alliances and change the culture of a group²³. But not all argues for the need of such a high number in order to see a transformed agenda. Kanter, amongst others, suggest that one can see a change before you reach 30%²⁴. Further on, she argues that when a minimum of 15 % women is reached, the women can start acting by their own agenda²⁵. Grey, on the other hand argues that there is not magical line at 30%. According to Grey we need to move away from this sort of thinking and start to consider at each case as

¹⁶ The *theory* of a critical mass comes from Kanter (1977) who had done research in an American corporation (Paxton/Hughes (2007) p 207) that showed the fact that women tend to act differently depending on the share of women in the group. The *term* critical mass is most know to be the used within nuclear physics where a critical mass is the smallest amount of nuclear material needed in order to create an explosion.

¹⁷ Dahlerup p 14

¹⁸ Paxton, Hughes (2007) p 208

¹⁹ Wängnerud (2008) p 60

²⁰ Stevens (2007) p 176

²¹ Paxton, Hughes (2007) p 208

²² United Nations Human Development Report (1995)

²³ Stevens (2007) p 72

²⁴ Paxton, Hughes (2007) p 207

²⁵ Wängnerud (2008) p 60

individually. She argues that it generally takes between 15% and 40% women before we can see women friendly policies introduced²⁶.

As we can see, there is still a debate in this field about when women start to make an impact on the politics that is presented. There are three levels of presence to take into consideration. The smallest share mentioned is 15%, the most referred is 30% and the highest 40%. One reason for this gap could be, as Grey and the influential scholar Drude Dahlerup points out, that there has been a lot of research in this area but in a lot of different contexts which has resulted in a lot of different numbers for what is considered to be “a critical mass”²⁷.

In contradiction to the theory of the critical mass there are also signs that show that a small number of women can affect the agenda in the same amount as a larger group. Research has shown that as women came closer to, or reached a critical mass the hostile environment increased which then led to the elected women stopped to talk about what is to be considered as female issues²⁸. In other words, as long as the women act along with the men, they are not considered to be a threat. Puwar established the term “space invaders” in order to describe such a situation; as long as the number of women is low, they do not disturb the habits of the organization and are not considered or treated like a threat²⁹. Being viewed upon as “space invaders” could then however actually work as an advantage for the few ones that are elected. This is possible since those women are not seen as a threat.

2.2 Treatment

But what are these threats and what affect do they have on the women that are elected? As noted there are advantages and disadvantages with a growing number of women in an assembly. The political arena has been (or still is in many states around the world) a strictly male domain, an increase of women is therefore considered as a threat to this hegemony. Studies have shown of an increased aggressiveness when the balance is changed. When the balance is changed it leads to an increased competition and exclusion³⁰. Grey’s study of

²⁶ Grey (2006) p 494

²⁷ Stevens (2007) p 176

²⁸ Stevens (2007) p 178 ff

²⁹ Puwar (2004)

³⁰ Paxton, Hughes (2007) p 211

women in New Zealand legislature showed that there was an increase in hostility towards women as soon as they started to grow in numbers³¹.

These sorts of reactions are especially visible when it comes to women who are elected through quotas. The main purpose with a quotation system is to redistribute power and destabilize status quo, something that could be very controversial for those who are in power. If the quota system is not accepted by the men there is a risk for the whole purpose and desired outcome to be undermined³². This can be done through accusing the women who are elected through quotas of not being qualified enough for the job³³. Namibia is today using a form of political party quota locally called the “zebra-system” in the elections to the local authority. This sort of quota system is not one that allocates a certain number of seats, but rather a system that focuses on the election ballot³⁴. The zebra-system in practice is that for every man that is on the ballot there should also be a woman. This sort of quotation has also been used in for instance Sweden during the 1994 election and onwards and has increased the number of women in the parliament^{35 36}.

2.3 Institutional and Structural Road Blocks

So far we have been focusing on what sort of “psychical” road blocks that women who want to change the agenda may face. But there are also a few of a more structural type. Results from research in the United States congress done by Noelle Norton showed that women, in order to influence on the practised politics, have to gain power within an institution before they could get any sort of power over policies that are important for women³⁷. The study also showed that a majority of all the floor activity came from an exclusive set of representatives whom hold key committee positions³⁸. This pattern could also be found in local municipals in Israel. Herzog here for example that the executive committee, that is considered to be the most important one, had an extreme male dominance³⁹.

³¹ Grey (2002)

³² Naniavdekar (2006) p 120

³³ Paxton, Huges p 165

³⁴ A state that has allocated a specific number of seats is Rwanda. This has led to the state having the highest number of female members of parliament, 48%

³⁵ In Swedish the system is called, a bit patronising, “varannan damernas (every second for the ladies)

³⁶ Tidskrift för genusvetenskap, nummer 4 2007

³⁷ In Duerst-Lahti, Kelly (1995) p 115

³⁸ In Duerst-Lahti, Kelly (1995) p 119

³⁹ Herzog (1999) p 191

In other words, if the power of policymaking occurs in committees and subcommittees where women are not included, the women will be less likely to make a difference; the politics of presence is not working in such a case⁴⁰. There is, which may not come as a greater chock, an importance of who holds a committee position. Women may have gained access to the council but if they are in a position where they cannot make a difference, this has not greater effect. What should be noted when considering these researches is that the results mentioned above are from states that are considered to be in the developed world, not in a developing country as Namibia. The different context and possible structure of institutions are something that we need to keep in mind. For instance, the committees in the United States are regarded as very powerful and influential⁴¹. Without knowing the exact formation of these countries constitution, it is likely to assume that they not are built up the exact same way as Namibia's. The posts that are important in for example Israel might not be so important in the case of Windhoek and therefore they may not be completely applicable on this case.

2.4 Shortage of Time

If we continue with the structural road blocks we will find another important factor - issue of time. This is something that is more likely to have the shape of a road block in poorer development countries than in the developed ones. As mentioned, Namibia has got a traditional way of looking at women. This is a tradition that constitutes a women's primary role as a mother and housewife⁴². If a woman is supposed to take care of the house and the family, the time to engage in politics is a scare resource. If a woman is having a full-time job, the time to spend on being a local councillor becomes even shorter. If a woman with a family, full-time job then has a councillor job to top this up, it would create a situation where she more or less is having three fulltime jobs. The city of Windhoek does not have fulltime employed councillors; therefore the time factor is something that we should take into consideration because it is something that could prevent the women from familiarizing with the work in the council.

⁴⁰ Duerst-Lahti, Kelly (1995) p 167,168

⁴¹ Stevens (2007) p 187

⁴² Ballington et al. (2005) p 44-45

2.5 Mandate

When it comes to research done on potential road blocks we are now touching on issues that are not yet fully explored. The matter of time is something that is more visible in development countries. Working half-time is for many people not an option due to low wages. The economical situation is something that could also affect the real influence of the council. Beall's research in South Africa on women on a local level and showed that there are problems regarding these particular issues. The municipal council had large problems with receiving money from the government due to heavy cutbacks from the central government. This tied the hands of the municipal council and left them vulnerable to how the economy fluctuated⁴³. In other words, the influence of a municipal council could vary over time depending if the economy is booming or if it has hit rock bottom. The South African government stated in a review of the local authority after its first 10 years that "the needs of local government are most critical, with the majority of municipalities not having the capacity ... to perform their delivery functions"⁴⁴. If this was the situation in South Africa, of which Namibia was a part of until 1989, it is not unlikely that they too could face this problem. If the municipal council does not have a capacity to perform its duties then they are powerless on issues that regard both women's issues and all others. It might also be that the council does have an influence over issues that is not related to women but in other areas. In what sort of areas does the council have a mandate? This area is the one that I consider to be where least research has been done. The other areas are to some extent explored but with a focus on the western liberal democracies. What is clearly missing is the development countries perspective and what sort of problems that these democracies have or may not have got.

2.6 Six Hypotheses

If we take a look back at this chapter I have discussed some road blocks that women are facing when entering a political area and when trying to transform the agenda. We have seen that there are physical road blocks such as a hostile environment, lack compromising and an undermining of the women who are elected on quotas. We have also seen that there are some road blocks that can be labelled as institutional and structural such as a shortage of time, exclusion from important seats and a possible lack of a real mandate for a council. A part of

⁴³ Beall; (2005) Decentralizing Government and Centralizing Gender in Southern Africa: Lessons from the South African Experience p 11-12

⁴⁴ Beall (2005) p 15

the research problem for this study is to exam what sort of road blocks that the women might face. In order to do so, I will now create six hypotheses that I will later on try to test on the council of Windhoek. These are:

- The political assembly do not have any power over issues that relates women
- The political assembly do not have any power at all
- The women do not hold any important positions in the council
- A shortage of time prevents the women from familiarize themselves with the issues that are handled in the council and therefore gives them a smaller change to transform the agenda.
- The quotation system undermines the councilors in the council
- The men excludes the women from the debate and does not want to cooperate with them

3. "Women's Interests"

3.1. The Concept of "Women's Interests"

In some sense it feels a bit strange to categorize issues as "typically female" or "typically male". The stereotyping of gender is a without a doubt a problem which prevents a more equal society. Placing women in one box and men in another is not to any help when it comes to evolve the society in the right direction. Having said that, this paper is not going to evaluate why this happens or what consequences this leads to.

But in order to conduct a study like this we have to come to a definition on what "women's interest" is. The debate on what this common interest could be is both amongst scholars and in the media a highly debated issue. The debate, at least in the Swedish media, tends to have a peak around the 8th of March each year and then disappear until the same period next year. But if we focus on what the scholars have to say about it then we find that there are a few different arguments that needs to be examined. As discussed earlier, there matter of female representation is a highly debated subject. There is quite a lot of research that provides us with arguments for and against an increase of women in the political assemblies. If we take it one step further, why is this important? Are there certain interests that women as group have a special understanding of and therefore are the only ones who can argue for these things? One argument for regarding why women is needed in politics is that the elected representatives should be considered as a "mirror" of those people that they represent. The representatives should not differ from its electorates when it comes to social status, economy and demography. This theory has been criticized by, for instance, Kymlicka who calls the idea of seeing the representatives as a mirror of the society as untenable⁴⁵. If we want to have fully representative assembly we would then have to create "a mirror" for every category of the electorate. Should we try to include people due to the fact that they have red/brown/blonde hair? Marion Young continues with the criticism claiming that "a relation of identity or similarity with constituents says nothing about what the representative does"⁴⁶. As an answer the question of whether the women do have a have certain interest or not, the influential British scholar Ann Phillips do claim that women do have certain concerns. Women have special interest when it comes to areas such as giving birth, sexual harassments, salaries, unpaid work etc⁴⁷. Stevens argues in favor of Phillips and quotes research that shows that

⁴⁵ Mansbridge (2005) p 624

⁴⁶ Mansbridge (2005) p 624

⁴⁷ Phillips (2000) p 86

women, in some areas, do have a deeper knowledge and expertise than most men⁴⁸. On the other hand, Phillips continues with the fact that women are not a homogenous group and there are still large differences between them. For example, not all women bare children, not all women think the same regarding abortion⁴⁹.

If we leave the debate on representation and take a closer look at what the research shows on women who are elected, we can see that there is a pattern in what sort of issues female politicians mentions as important. When summarizing which issues that women consider to be important we can see that a lot of them are related to what traditional can be referred to as welfare issues. Rosenbluth et al. presents an increase in non military government expenditure, in other words social services, as the number of women is elected into parliament^{50 51}. Wängnerud's research showed that the more women that were voted into the Swedish parliament (Riksdag), issues like *elder care*, *family policy* and *health care* were prioritized⁵². Herzog agrees with the all three of those and adds *the youth sphere* as an issue⁵³. Mansbridge, as well as Krook, continues in the same pattern as Wängnerud writing that *health* is an important issue for women but also *education* and *women's rights issues*^{54 55}. This pattern does argue for some sort of common interest within the "group" of women.

3.2 Concretization of Women's Interest

We have now come a bit further on our way of defining women's interests. We have seen that women tend to argue for issues that can be categorized as social services. How do we do if we want to operationalize our theory developing study in the best possible way? This of course has no gives answer. What I am looking for is to find (i) if the women have affected the agenda and (ii) what possible road blocks that could have prevented them from doing so.

⁴⁸ Stevens (2007)p 72

⁴⁹ Phillips (2000) p 87

⁵⁰ Rosenbluth (2006) p 7

⁵¹ Rosenbluth (2006) p 182 ff

⁵² Wängnerud (1998)

⁵³ Herzog (1999) p 189

⁵⁴ Mansbridge (2005) p 631

⁵⁵ Krook (2006a) p 112

When operationalizing the issue of women in politics, I took some help from Wängnerud's study and got two criteria's that fit very well into this study⁵⁶. I have used these in order to exam my research questions.

1. The women are considered to be a social category.
2. There is not an equal balance between men and women.

- *The women are considered to be a social category.* The women have a certain interest in issues regarding issues that can be liked to social issues. These are health- and eldercare, education and women's rights issues. If the women are able to transform the agenda we should then see an influence of these sorts of subjects

-*There is not an equal balance between men and women.* The women as a group will have a problem in addressing these issues. They will face some sorts or road block that will prevent them from handling the issues. These road block will be either directly created by the other men in the council or indirectly through the structure of the institution.

These will be the general criteria's used in this study. I also need to create a more specific version for our case, the council of Windhoek. The Namibian context is different from the Western one. The culture says that a woman first and foremost should take care of the family. Taking care of the family can be both having a job and to do the domestic work when having finished the job. Domestic violence is also a problem in Namibia. There are 600-700 cases reports of women being raped each year. This is assumed only to the top of the iceberg since it is assumed that only 5% of the victims report this to the police⁵⁷. Further on, the economical situation is worth to take into consideration. The country is a poor nation with the largest income differences in the world today⁵⁸. With this in mind, we need to create a slightly different definition of what the women's interest is as a complement to the one mentioned above. This is the definition that I am going to use in this case:

-*Women's interests in Namibia are to create a more equal society where the economical differences are decreasing, domestic violence is not accepted and the women have a smaller role in issues regarding housing.*

⁵⁶ Wängnerud (1999) p 129

⁵⁷ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; Namibia p 30

⁵⁸ UN Human Development Report 2009 p 197

If there is a female influence in the council, we should then see some resolutions in issues concerning the city's involvement in assisting elderly, families and the fight against domestic violence.

3.3 Previous Research

When it comes to previous research regarding the politics of presence with a focus on possible road blocks the literature is slowly growing. Here are some examples of case studies that have been made.

Sandra Grey showed in her research on the New Zealand parliament an increased hostile environment as they share of women was raising⁵⁹. From having a very low number of personal attacks and interruptions in the parliament, the number quickly increased. Notable in this study is that there hostile acts were mostly caused by men but a lot of the hostility came from women as well. The importance of committees has been investigated by Norton⁶⁰. The results showed that the committees and subcommittees have an influence over bills and in these committees the majority were men. Since the authority was within these committees, an increased number of women in the council would not lead to any transformation of the agenda.

When trying to find a research report similar to this one concerning Namibia, there are to my knowledge none. There are a few ones that handle the efforts that have been done towards creating a more equal Namibia. For instance we have Bauer who examines the women struggle to get into parliament through the implementation of the zebra-system⁶¹. If we zoom out and take a look at research done on in the sub-Saharan region regarding the politics of presence we have few more to choose from. Research done in Burkina Faso showed that women were lacking of knowledge when it came to the political process and therefore could not make a difference. When it came to the structure of the parties, the women were not in any high positions which led to a situation where the men could control both the party and the selection of positions⁶². A case study done in South African parliament, the elected women had a difficult situation when trying to implement policies due to shortage of resources⁶³.

⁵⁹ Grey (2002) p 23

⁶⁰ Duerst-Lahti, Kelly (1995) p 115

⁶¹ Bauer (2004)

⁶² IDEA Women in parliament: Beyond numbers (2005) p 137

⁶³ IDEA Women in parliament: Beyond numbers (2005) p 234-235

There were also problems when it came to making the different branches cooperate something that led to bill not being implemented.

The previous research points towards the fact that institutions can work as potential road blocks for women. But this field is still needs a further examination regarding the structure of the institution. This study will hopefully contribute to examining this possible road block for female influence in politics.

3.4 Purpose and Questions of Research

With this theory in mind we can then focus on the questions of research. My purpose for this research is to find out if the politics of presence is valid in the Namibian context and what sort of road blocks that the women might face with a certain focus on the role of institutions.

The question for research will be;

- Have the women who are elected into the municipal council of Windhoek transformed the agenda?
- What affect does the structure of the institution have as possible road block?
- What sort of other road blocks might stop the women from transforming the agenda?

4. Design

In order to fulfill the purpose and answering the questions of research we need an appropriate method. In this paper I will use a couple of different methods. The advantage of being in Windhoek gave me the possibility to do interviews, to study the items that were handled during the meetings and get a closer understanding of how the council is structured.

4.1 Type

This paper is a case study on the council of Windhoek. Since I am using various methods in order to study what can be considered to be a group, a case study is the best option⁶⁴.

This paper has the ambition to be a theory developing paper. The politics of presence has little developed theory concerning the role of institutions and therefore this paper will try to contribute to this area. I do not have the ambition to test whether a presence of women in the council of Windhoek changes the agenda or not but rather to develop the politics of presence regarding the importance of the mandate and role of institutions. On this subject the politics of presence has still got some holes to fill and this paper will try to cover up some of these holes. This paper will, hopefully, complement the previous research in this field. When using already existing theories in a case study, there is a thin line between the study being a theory *developing* and theory *testing*. This paper is not an exception. I am using existing research in order to create hypotheses that will be tested on a single case. Therefore, one could argue that this paper is a theory testing study and not a theory developing. Nonetheless, this paper is to be considered to be a theory developing. I intend to examine what role the institutions plays in the sense that they could work as possible road blocks. There is little research on in the politics of presence that focuses on the role of institutions and this paper will add new knowledge to this area.

4.2 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the council of Windhoek. This was mainly due to a time limit. It would have been very interesting to compare the results in this case to another council in Namibia. If we could compare the results then we could fill the hole that is exciting in this field. The persons who are interviewed are only women. This is because I am looking for

⁶⁴ Marshall, Rossman (2006) p 56

what they might consider to be hinders in order to change the agenda. Of course it would not have been a disadvantage interviewing all the members of the council. But, again, the time was not enough for this and it is possible to answer the purpose of the study without interviewing them.

4.3 Why Windhoek

Why I chosen to do the study in Windhoek, Namibia and not somewhere else are both due to practical and research related reasons. Let us take the researched related reasons first. There are a few good reasons to why the council of Windhoek is an interesting case to study. The low number of researches on this field done on development countries, especially Namibia, is one very good reason for choosing Windhoek⁶⁵. My aim is to contribute to the theory on the politics of presence when it comes to development countries and Windhoek fulfills this criterion. One other benefit with choosing Windhoek as a case is the number of elected women. The council has got 15 councilors and 6 of those are women. This makes a total percentage of 40, which is a relatively high number. If we use the most common number linked to the critical mass, 30%, the council of Windhoek exceeds this number and therefore makes a good case to study. Had the number been lower, say around 15 to 20 %, I do believe that it would have been hard to draw any conclusions from the results related to the politics of presence. The size of the city is another reason for choosing this city. The city of Windhoek is relatively small, around 250'000 inhabitants. Since this is single case study, a larger city would have made it difficult to perform such a study due to a lot more bureaucracy for instance. If we then take the practical reasons, the main reason is because the official language in Namibia is English. My knowledge in this language is good enough in order to communicate and to read various documents that are needed in order to fulfill the purpose of this study. Since I need to go through a lot of documents in order to see if the women have changed the agenda it is much easier, and a lot less time consuming, to do this in English in comparison to hiring an interpreter and possible a translator. Something that would have been the case if I had done the research in a country that for instance had French or Portuguese as an official language.

⁶⁵ One guess could be that the state only has around 2 million inhabitants and is not to be considered as a country with a lot of influence in the region of Southern Africa.

4.4 Areas to Investigate and Data

This study will contain of three different types of data. I will use the resolutions, interviews and the official documents received from the council and the city of Windhoek. In order to exam the hypotheses I will also examine the structure of the council and what sort of mandate that they have.

4.4.1 Resolutions

This examination is of course an important segment of this case study. If the politics of presence is valid then we should see an agenda that fulfill what we have discussed before in the theory chapter. The time period for these is from March to May of 2009. In there we can see all the decision made by the council of Windhoek and what sort of issues they are regarding. The where 70 items that were handled during this time and around 650 pages, including a background material to these. The reason for examine the resolutions is that it shows in a good way what sort of questions that the council is handling. As mentioned earlier in this paper, an increased number of women in a deciding body do change the agenda of the same. If we can see some evidences of this in the resolutions that are examined, then we have some evidences of that the politics of presence is valid in this case as well.

4.4.1.1 Problems

One thing that could be considered a problem regarding the resolutions is that I do not have a complete year of resolutions. This matter is of course unsatisfying. I tried to get access to more material but was told that this was not possible. Instead I was referred to the “year book” that was handed out once a year. I got a hold of this so called book but it turned out to be a few pages with a summary of what the municipal office had done over the year. I do believe that I can cover up what could be missing with the data that has been collected from the interviews. The main focus in this study is not only to see if the number of women in the council has transformed the agenda but also what sort of road blocks that exists in this environment. Therefore I can still argue that the purpose of the study will be fulfilled.

4.4.2 Interviews

The interviews are used in order to receive information regarding all six hypotheses. They are crucial when it comes to the hypotheses regarding time, exclusion from the debate and possible undermining due to the quotation system. If we want to get the opinions on these matters, the only way to do so is through interviews. Further on, they are also complementing for the hypotheses on mandate and important positions. The interviews helped to get some “inside information” regarding who has the most influence in the council and if the councilors feel like they have a “real” mandate or not.

The interviews were mostly of a respondent character but also of an informant character. They were respondent interviews in that sense that the interviewees talked about how they experience their situation as a woman in the council, what they felt like the biggest obstacles as a woman in politics and so on. But the interviews were also of a more informant character when they were asked to describe their work in the council and what positions that had most influence. Since I were not completely familiar with the political and social context in Namibia when starting this study, the interviews gave me a valuable look into this context and what areas that are important to look into. The interviews were semi-open. In other words, in case that I did not get an answer that I thought was completely happy with, I had the opportunity to do a follow-up question.

4.4.2.1 Ethics

The women who were interviewed were given a promise of anonymously. This was done due to the reason that it would be easier for them to talk about issues that they might feel insecure to talk about if they knew that they were going to be mentioned by name. More precisely, they were told that they would not be mentioned by name. I told them that if I used a quote they would be given either a letter or a number, randomly chosen by me. They were told that since they are working in a relatively small council, that there are always a risk that someone, somehow, could find out what they has said⁶⁶. All the women agreed to these terms and said that they had understood what sort of promise for anonymously that I could give them. They were all given the option to stop the interview at anytime and avoid of course avoid answering those questions that they did not want to answer. Further on, all the councilors got my contact details in case that they wanted to drop out of the study. If they wanted to drop out of this

⁶⁶ Kvale (2009) p 88

study, all the material that were recorded and written down during the interviews was going to be deleted and not used in any way. Gladly, no one of the participants has decided to cancel their participation.

4.4.2.2 Problems during interviews

All but one of the interviewees was done in private. All except one took place either at the councilor's workplace or at the municipal council with only me and the respondent present. One interview was done in the home of one of the councilors. There were two kids (5 to 12 years old) present in the house, not participating but they could hear what we talked about. Even though we were not alone I do not believe that this had any effect of what came out of the interviews. Regarding the issue of time, some of the interviews were a bit hectic, as they tend to be when interviewing elite persons⁶⁷. But we managed to talk about those issues that were planned without having to skip any topics or follow-up questions.

Before the interviews I thought a lot about the cultural differences between me and the women who was going to get interviewed. There is always a risk of misunderstanding when different culture meets under circumstances like these⁶⁸. The fact that I, as a white man from Europe, was going to interview black Namibian women whom many of them literary fought in the war for independence or with a risk for their own lives in other ways worked against the apartheid regime, was going to ask these women about problems that they might face when it comes to practicing politics was something that I thought a lot about. But even though there are still a lot of racism and, especially in the capital of Windhoek, an indescribable segregation between black and white people in Namibia, I thought the interviews went well. Sweden and Swedish people have a good reputation due to its support of the groups that worked against the apartheid government. I do believe that this could have helped a bit when it came to gaining trust with the respondents. I got the feeling that the women could speak out how they felt about being a woman in politics and I do not think that the result would have been substantial different if the interviews would have been done by someone else.

⁶⁷ Marshall, Rossman (2006) p 104

⁶⁸ Marshall, Rossman (2006) p 90, 91

4.4.2.3 Selections of respondents

The council of Windhoek is small council. The council has only six women and out of these six, five belonged to the ruling party Swapo. The Swapo-party has got a very solid majority in the council, holding 10 out of 15 seats. This means that they do not have to consider any other parties when it comes to what sort of resolutions they want to be carried through. I was aiming to have a total selection of the women who was elected into the council. I tried to get an interview with the one woman in the council who did not belong to Swapo. Unfortunately, she left the country for a longer period during my time in Namibia. But due to the fact that Swapo has a solid two-thirds majority and her party, the DTA, only holds this one spot in the council, I still believe that I have a solid ground to stand on. In regards to this paper it is more important to interview member of the Swapo-party. The biggest advantage having done this interview with her was that she might have provided more information about the real structure of council since she did not belong to the Swapo-party and therefore had no alliances in the same way. Only choosing women were my target since the study aims to reveal what sort of road blocks that these women are facing. Having done interviews with the men would not have helped to fulfill this purpose to a larger extent.

4.4.3 Structure of the Council

The structure, both the formal and informal, will be investigated in this study. In order to cover the formal structure, I used the official information that I got from the office of the municipality in Windhoek. What is interesting to analyze regarding the structure, is if the women are at any high and influential positions. If they are at the high positions then our hypothesis regarding an exclusion from important seats could be proven wrong. In order to find out if there was a more informal structure, I could use the advantage of being able to do interviews.

4.4.4 Mandate

What sort of mandate the council has is very important when it comes to finding out if the structure of institutions can be considered to be a road block. If the council has a weak mandate on issues that are liked to women's rights, then there is a small possibility that the women can have a real influence in these issues. It is also important to consider if the council have a tight economical situation or not. If they have a tight budget, this could then work as potential road block for handling the issues that we can consider to be liked to women.

5. Criteria's for analyzing

5.1 Resolutions

When analyzing the resolutions I was looking for a two different things:

- *Who had presented it*
- *If it could be labeled as a female subject related to the Namibian context*

I have here added the point “Who had presented it” as a complement to “The Namibian woman’s interest”. We have seen that a hostile environment could prevent the women from being active in the council. If there then are a lot of resolutions presented by women then this could be a sign of them being able to transform the agenda. The theory regarding the critical mass says that there should be a female influence on the agenda in our case. If we cannot see any influence, then there are most likely some form of road block that prevents the women from doing so.

5.1.1 How many do we need?

If we want to determine whether there is a female influence or not we have to determine how large part of the resolutions that can be linked to the Namibian woman’s interest or been presented by any of the female councilors. A council handles a variety issues and therefore I believe that we cannot set the limit to the same level as there are women, 40%. It would be a bit more realistic to assume that, if the women have transformed the agenda, around 15 % of the items should have some sort of female influence. So if 15 % of all resolutions can be linked to women, then we can say that there is a (small) influence of women in the council.

5.2 Interviews

There is no universal way of analyzing respondent interviews. In relations to informant interviews it is a bit trickier. But I decided to go with a categorizing of the answers that I received⁶⁹. This means that I went through the interviews and marked where I found support respectively not support for the hypotheses. This was a very successful way of discovering

⁶⁹ Esaiasson et al. p 305

whether the hypotheses could be validated or not. In order to make this a bit more clearly, I will give a short example of this categorizing;

Q: Do you feel like you have a good balance between work, home and being a councilor?

A: No, honestly no. There is no balance of time. We are exploiting ourselves or we are exploited by the system. Maybe that will be the right way. There is no balance at all.

This (short quote of an) answer would be marked as a possible support for the hypotheses that the elected women do not have enough time to familiarize themselves with the issues that are handled in the council. I will also give one example of a case where there would have been a sign of the hypothesis being false;

Q: Do you feel like you have a good balance between work, home and being a councilor?

A: "Yes, I have a good balance between these three things. When I am at work I can focus on that and when I am not at work I have the time to be with my family and do household work and have some time to prepare myself for the council meetings"

5.3 Structure

When it comes to analyzing the structure and setting up criteria's for this, it was a bit easier than the interviews. The council of Windhoek is a small council and I was able to get a good view regarding all the main posts. With help from the interviews and information guides provided by the municipal I could then find what sort of posts that are the most influential ones and if the women then are left out of the ones that has got any influence.

5.4 Mandate

This area will be analyzed through information received from the interviewees and from information gathered about what issues that the council has the right to decide on and not. By comparing these two, I will be able to see if the council has a strong mandate and therefore are able to decide on a number of fields or if they have a weak mandate and then are having a difficult task of implementing the policies. By also considering the financial situation and not just the structural, I will hope to see what *real* mandate the council has. If I was only looking at what issues that they have a mandate in, I would lose out on how the reality is shaped. The situation could be similar to the case mentioned earlier regarding South Africa where the council had a fairly strong mandate on paper but economical constrains made the mandate weak.

6. Results from the analyze

6.1 The resolutions

6.1.1 Subject of the resolution

When it comes to analyzing the resolutions, the result shows that it is hard to say that there is a female influence. Only one resolution did contain issues that could be linked to the Namibian woman’s interest and two other resolutions that could be considered to fit into the more general term of “women’s interest”. This made a total of 4 % (if we add the two other resolutions), nowhere near the 15 % that was the limit. An overwhelming part of the resolutions are dealing with issues regarding property and/ or a development of these. For instance, a lot of the resolutions were dealing with houses that want to change the registration from being a residential house into a commercial house called “rezoning”.

Other areas were buying/selling of municipal property, building for instance water lines and others more unspecific such as report from the mayors participation in a meeting in Kenya and deciding on which entrepreneur that would be given the rights on opening a business in an empty building that belong to the municipal. When examining the resolutions there were also a quite high number of items that were labeled as non-public. According to the Local Authority Act of 1992, if two-thirds of the members in council want to keep so-called staff matter closed for the public, then it is possible⁷⁰.

Here is a diagram of how the resolutions could be labelled:

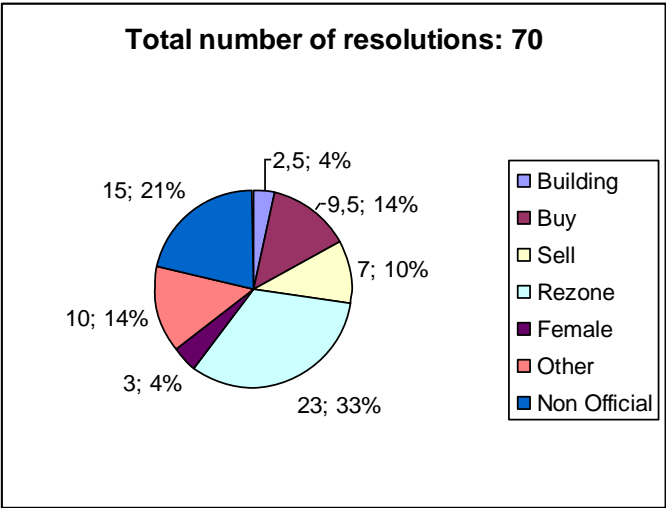


Figure 6.1.1: Subject of the resolutions

⁷⁰ The criteria is that the matter is relating to “the appointment, promotion, conditions of employment, and discipline of any particular officer r employee of a local authority council” (act 23 of 1992)

Below is a summary of the three resolutions that made “the cut”:

Resolution # 8.3.13

This resolution features a text that can be likened to what we mentioned regarding women’s interest. The resolution handles a number of “informal businesses” on property that does not allow such activities. These informal businesses are operated by, according to the text in the resolution, of mostly low educated women with little experience of the formal labour market⁷¹. The resolution also mentions the fact that these women have the responsibility to provide food, shelter and education for their children, this is something that can be likened to the more specific interest that the Namibian women has.

Resolution # 8.5.28

This resolution was handling a suggestion made by the First Lady of Namibia, Mrs Pohamba. She is asking for used furniture should be donated to the city’s major hospital, Katatura State hospital. Since the health care was one of the general things, not specifically Namibian, which women did care more than men for, this resolution can be categorized as one of those.

Resolution # 9.2.14

This resolution was similar to the one above. The subject was to donate computers that the municipal was not using anymore. Possible receivers were, a bit indistinct, mentioned as schools, churches organizations and individuals. Since education was one area that women prioritize when entering the political arena, this resolution could be considered to have an influence by women. On the other hand, the resolution does not say where the computers were sent; the computers might end up in the hands of any individual.

6.1.2 Who had presented the resolution?

This turned out to be impossible to examine. None of the resolutions could be traced to any of the councilors, man or woman. All of the resolutions were of such kind that they were pre-handled by the administrators of the municipal. For instance; the resolutions that regarded a purchase or a sale of property and rezoning were presented by the Chief Executive Office,

⁷¹ Resolutions handled on April 29th 2009 p 46ff

CEO. The CEO is the organization that handles this area and then gives a suggestion to the council on what to decide. Therefore it is not possible to examine if women do presents more items than men or if it is the other way around.

6.2 Hypotheses

6.2.1 Time

If we start with the hypothesis regarding time:

- *A shortage of time prevents the women from familiarize themselves with the issues that are handled in the council and therefore gives them a smaller chance to transform the agenda.*

As noted earlier, time is a limited resource. It is limited for local politicians in Sweden but even more so when it comes to development countries. The ability to work on half-time may be an alternative in theory but in practice it becomes nearly impossible since the pay check then also would be cut in half. If you then add that Namibia is a country with a “tradition” that proclaims that a woman should take care of the husband, the children as well as all the domestic work, it is likely to assume that the time that these elected women can reserve on being a councillor is very limited. On this subject there were almost consensus among the councillors. Most of them felt like the time to put on their full time job, family and council is not enough. One woman had this to say about her life as a councillor;

“-...sometimes it is not enough because you are now working under pressure. You had hectic day at your full time work and in the evening you must sit with this documents from municipality and you make sure that you read from a to z.” (9)

The traditional role of women as the care taker of the family is something that is validated by the interviewed women;

“-...here in Namibia women gets kitchen. And also the job, most women is doing domestic work washing, cleaning and so on” (3)

During the interviews it also got to my knowledge that it is not just full-time job, work as a councillor and family/domestic work that the women had to cope with, but also assisting the community. Working in the community and making it a better place is also something that the

women are supposed to take care of. This makes the time to put on council work even shorter for those who have to do this as well. When it comes to the possibility to do a good job as councillor many of them say that they cannot perform as good as they want to. The limit of time to focus on the duties that comes with being a councillor affects their work as councillors;

“...because at the end you’re not really perform 100% as expected” (9)

When it comes to finding a possible solution for the situation for this problem, most of the have the same solution; make the councillor work a full-time job. This was something that they are all agreeing on. The fact that they have to work full-time and at the same time being full-time employed is something that they all think should be abolished.

“-We wish it will be understood and be taken as a decision by the local body to say government should amend the act to allow those who want to be local authority councilors to be full time councilor, it is only when you’ll be able to do justice to the community and for yourself and to be happy.” (7)

The feeling from interviews was that they felt very strongly for the issue of making the councilors full time. There were also some respondents who argued that they do not get any notice from the national government when it comes to this. Most likely it is related to the monetary issues. Since Namibia is a poor state, they do not have enough money to keep all the members of the local council full time. If we then do a short summery; There are, in many cases an extreme, shortage of time for the councillors to put down on being just councillors. They do say that it is very hectic being councillors and that it in most cases does affect their ability to familiarize themselves with the issues that they are handled in the council. But no one directly say that the shortage of time prevents them from making an impact in what is said and done in the council.

6.2.2 Exclusion

- *The men excludes the women from the debate and does not want to cooperate with them*

One other the road blocks that women can face is a hostile and exclusion from the decision-making and the debates. The respondents were asked if they have experienced or seen

something that could resemble to this. Most of the councillors could not see any of this in the council. None of the women can say that they are treated differently due to the fact that they were women. The impression from the interviews was that as long as you understand the matter that is being discussed you can get an influence in the debate. There are differences in the council but nothing that has to do with gender;

“-...we can come together to maybe decide something we can agree or we can disagree. In the end of the time we can see which, how many supports this idea then we can go with the majority.”(3)

When talking to the councilors it seems like there are more differences between the different parties rather than between the men and then women. Since Swapo got a very solid majority (10 of 15 seats) it does not concern them that much if a consensus can be reached or not. I got the impression that the most important thing is to get the opposition to agree with the resolutions that are handled. What is also important when having meetings in the councilor is not just if you are a man or women but to know what the issue is about. Many of them said that knowledge is the key to being influential in the council. If you have a deeper understanding of the subject that is discussed then the others will listen to you and take notice of what you are saying. A quick summery of this hypothesis says that an exclusion from the debate or a lack of compromising is nothing that, according to the respondents, can be seen in the council. At least not to that extend that it prevents the women from speaking out and saying what they want.

6.2.3 Quotation

- *The quotation system undermines the councilors in the council*

The opinions on the quotation system are from the interviewed women point of view only positive. I could not see any negative reaction towards the system from any of the respondents. They all agree on the necessity of the system in order to get women into the political arena.

“That is the only way that you can really have, women especially, to get elected in positions of power or government and that’s why in the local authority, because that is where the

zebra-list have been used, more women are elected other than region and national government you don't get as many percentage of women elected.” (4)

But the system is not appreciated by all their male colleagues. A few of the women said that they have heard negative remarks from some of the fellow party members. I could not find out if the critique were from anyone *within* the council, something that then could have been a sign of either an undermining or perhaps a support for the hypothesis on a hostile environment. I got the impression that most of the critique came from members of the party that were either not on the election list or in some other way “lost” something due to the use of the zebra system. One councilor said that they had a lot more negative critique in the beginning of the process but it has become more accepted as time passed by. As far as I got on this matter, I could not hear any signs of that the zebra system is undermining the women in the council. I have to admit that since it is a controversial issue, there is a possibility that the women might have kept some of the criticism could have come from within the council to themselves. But none the less, I got no evidences that the hypotheses on undermining could be validated.

6.2.4 Important positions

- *The women do not hold any important positions in the council*

Within the council there are three positions that the councillors can be elected to. There is the mayor, deputy mayor and the chairperson for the management committee. Here is how they are divided:

Mayor: Man (Swapo)

Deputy Mayor: Woman (Swapo)

Management Committee⁷²: Woman (Swapo)

As we can see there are two women and one man. Out of these positions we can say that this hypothesis cannot be validated; out of the three positions available the women got two and

⁷² The person on the Management Committee chair has the responsibility to handle the contacts between the management committee and the council.

therefore would hold some important seats. What can be hold in favour of our hypotheses it is that the position as mayor is without a doubt the heaviest one. This position is the only one that is a full time job and the mayor is, naturally, the one that gets the most public attention. In comparison to the studies that were done in Israel and in the US, the council of Windhoek is structured in a different way and there are no extra influential seats except the ones written above. For instance, there are not any committees that the councillors could belong to. When asking the women about who had the most influence in the council, the mayor was one of the answer but many also said that they all had the same influence, especially when it comes to have debates within the council. I did not hear that any position, apart from these three, was mentioned. Therefore I will consider this hypothesis to be false.

6.2.5 Mandate regarding women

- *The political assembly do not have any power over issues that relates women*

When it comes to this matter we have to take a look on what mandate the council has. According to the official documents provided by the city of Windhoek and information received from Commonwealth Local Government Forum, CLGF, the mandate of the local Authority is very limited. The issues that they have any influence over are:

- Fire-/civil protection
- Housing
- Water/ sanitation
- Culture and Sports
- Electricity
- Tourism

If we relate this to the criteria's set up regarding the interests of women in Namibia, none but two, Housing and Water, can be linked to the women. If we then take a look at what housing means in practice by examine the resolutions, they were almost all liked to give permission to either sell or buy the government property. This can then not be considered to be an issue where the women have got a certain interest. When it comes to water supply and electricity, this can to some extent be related to women. The matter of water is something that is liked to

the criteria of family. If the women are supposed to take care of the family, water is a necessity, especially when it comes to cleaning and cooking. Same arguments can be made for the issue of electricity. So there is some evidence that the council has got a power of female issues, but to a very small extent. This is something that, according to the interest of the Namibian woman, can be regarded as a possible confirmation of the hypothesis that the political assembly does not hold any power over issues that relates to women. When talking about this with one of the respondents she said something that also can be seen as a confirmation of the hypothesis;

“...you do not have power you do not have financial strength for our local politics here. Our income is only what we generate from the rent. And you need to do so much to make your residence comfortable. You don't have financial resources so if local authorities can be empowered in terms of financial resources, other than just collecting from the rent. Then there can be much more towards uplifting the local authority.” (4)

6.2.6 Mandate in general

- *The political assembly do not have any power at all*

This hypothesis is of course linked to the one that we just handled. I mentioned the fact that the council has a very weak mandate when it comes to the issues that is related to first and foremost women. But if we take a look at what sort of issues that the local authority and the council has got an influence in none of these are issues that affects the greater part of the society. If we take a look at what areas where the council has no influence over we find education, police, social welfare, public health, transportation and income taxes. These are areas where the local authority has no influence over and are centralized to the national government. Since the council has its biggest incomes from rates and electricity the economical resources are not as large as they could have been if there was some sort of city tax⁷³. With this in mind it is fair to say that the council does not have a lot of power. The hypothesis that the council has no power *at all* cannot be confirmed but the power that it has is very limited.

⁷³ CLGF: Namibia p 143

7. Conclusions and Final discussion

In order to refresh the memory of the reader regarding the purpose and research questions for the study I will now write it again;

The purpose for this research is to find out if the politics of presence is valid in the Namibian context and what sort of road blocks that the women might face with a certain focus on the role of institutions.

The question for research will be;

- *Have the women who are elected into the municipal council of Windhoek transformed the agenda?*
- *What affect does the structure of the institution have as possible road block?*
- *What sort of other road blocks might stop the women from transforming the agenda?*

What are then the answers to the research questions? The resolutions gave us the information that there were only one resolution that can be liked to women concerning if we use the criteria's that I created for the Namibian women and two more if we use a broader measurement, a total of 4%. This states that there is a very small female influence on the agenda and not even near the 15% that was stated as a minimum. Why this was the case was something that we could see in the evaluation of the six hypotheses that were created out of the challenges to the politics of presence. So the answer to the first question regarding a possible transformation of the agenda, the answer is "no".

In order to answer research question number two, what affect does the structure of the institution have as a possible road block, we will use the hypotheses as a help. The created hypotheses are;

- *A shortage of time prevents the women from familiarize themselves with the issues that are handled in the council and therefore gives them a smaller change to transform the agenda.*
- *The women do not hold any important positions in the council*

- *The political assembly do not have any power over issues that relates women*
- *The political assembly do not have any power at all*

The elected women experienced a very hectic situation having to deal with a full-time job, domestic work in different form and being a councillor. These three “full time jobs” would, according to the councillors, have an effect on their possibility to familiarize them with the issues that were handled in the council. When talking about influence in the council (mentioned in the hypothesis on exclusion from the debate), the most important thing was that you knew what you were talking about. Since most of the women have a very busy schedule, the time they have to prepare themselves for the meetings is short. This will then, in some cases, lead to the councillors not being fully informed regarding the issues they are handling. If they are not fully informed, they will have a smaller change to influence the issues that are debated. So this hypothesis can be validated. If we then take the issue regarding important positions in the council, the women were considered to hold important seats. The most important seat and the only seat that was a full-time job, the mayor seat, were obtained by a man. But the women had the deputy mayor seat and the seat of the Management Committee. Since the women hold two out of three seats, and there were no committees to take into consideration, the hypothesis concerning seats could not be validated. If we then continue move on to the issue of power, we saw some interesting results. From studying the council of Windhoek’s ability to address issues, the evidences points towards that they does not have a large influence. The council has a weak mandate and this is due to a high level of centralization. Many of the important topics such as education, social welfare, police and matters regarding transportation are controlled on the national level. This centralization leads to the fact that women cannot transform the agenda to a larger extent. This is something that can also be said about the whole council. This is something that I have not seen in any of the researches that I have studied on beforehand. It could be so that this sort of problems is something that is more common in development countries rather in western democracies. In this case, there is a limit to the politics of presence when it comes to the level of centralization. The answer to my second question of research is that the structure of the institutions does have and affect as a road block due to a high level of centralization, this leads to a situation where the women cannot transform the agenda.

With this in mind, I will now focus on the thirds question of research; what other sorts of road block can there be in the council? In order to answer this I used two hypotheses;

- *The quotation system undermines the councilors in the council*
- *The men exclude the women from the debate and do not want to cooperate with them.*

I found no evidences that the quotation system undermined the women in the council. When planning for this study I thought that the zebra system would have an effect as a road block but the interviews with the women showed me otherwise. There are and were criticism against the system but from what I could understand, and when trying to read between the lines during the interviews, I could not find any evidences of this within the council. The second hypothesis touched on the matter of exclusion from the debates and this leading to the women having a smaller influence on the agenda. This was also something that could be falsified. I found no proof of the women being excluded from the debate due to the fact that they were women. They all felt they could talk about what ever issues without the men being hostile or excluding in any way. This was something that surprised me. I thought that since (i) Namibia has a very traditional way of looking at women and (ii) a lot of research shows that this problem exist in countries that are much more equal, that this hypotheses would be confirmed. I have to admit that it might be so that the answers that I got from the interviews regarding these two areas may not have told the whole truth. I do hope that they were sincere and honest but I would have been ethically wrong not to mention my suspicions on this.

If we then sum up the results from the study we can say that the women have a small change to transform the agenda. This is mostly because the council itself has a very weak mandate when it comes to what issues that can be handled and not. The fact that the women have to do domestic work and have a full-time job along being councilors does also affect their possibility in having an influence in those few matters where the council has got an influence.

8. Further research

In general there is strong need of more research concerning the limits of the politics of presence in development countries. There are very little studies done on this issue in new democracies and less rich countries. If I may become a bit more specific on this, I believe that the subject of centralization of power and what affect this has on the possibilities on a female influence. In this study we saw clear signs of a large share of women in the local council who did not have a large influence on the presented politics due to this fact. Without know the exact correlation between the size of the GDP and level of centralization it is fair to believe that a lower GDP can prevent a decentralization and therefore hinder those who are elected from making a difference. When I was doing my interviews I was told by most the of my respondents that the reason for Namibia having a lot more women involved in local politics in comparison to the regional and national, was that it was because they wanted to get involved in and the local level was the best way to start. If these women experience that they cannot make a difference they might not take the time to advance up the latter and into the assemblies that has the real power. This would then be a loss of important experience for the whole nation.

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Appendix I: Namibia

Quick facts:

Capital: Windhoek

Population: 2'100'000

President: Hifikepunye Pohamba (Swapo)

Area: ~825'000 km² (Sweden ~450'000)

AIDS/HIV rate: ~15% among 15 – 49 years old⁷⁴

Namibia is a state that is located northwest of South Africa. The country's main incomes originate from agriculture, uranium extraction, lead mines and a growing tourism sector. Namibia today is the world's second largest lead producer and the fourth largest uranium producer⁷⁵. The issue of the growing uranium production is a very controversial since it threatens the growing tourism sector in the country when new mines open close to tourists attractions.

Political history

When it comes to (somewhat) recent political history, the nation of Namibia has truly dark history. The country first got colonized by Germany in the year 1884. The Germans were extremely cruel and opened what is to be considered as the first concentration camps the world had ever seen in their attempt to exterminate the ethnic groups Herero and Namas. 80% of the Herero and 50% of the Namas is killed⁷⁶.

Namibia, or South West Africa as it was called then, became a South African protectorate after Germany lost its colonies after the First World War. The country adopted South Africa's apartheid laws and the black and colored people of Namibia were, yet again, denied their human rights⁷⁷.

⁷⁴ <http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/namibia.asp>

⁷⁵ <http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/uprod.html>

⁷⁶ Guide to Namibian Politics (2008) p 5

⁷⁷ Guide to Namibian Politics (2008) p 5

In the 1966, the oppressed parts of the nation stated an uprising against the South African regime⁷⁸. This led to a bloody conflict between South African occupation force and the different guerilla groups that were fighting for an independent Namibia.

When Angola became independent from Portugal in 1975, the resistance movement moved its forces into the newly liberated country and continued its struggle from there. This started a war between South Africa and Angola which lasted until 1989 when a peace agreement was signed⁷⁹. In 1989 Namibia became independent from South Africa and the following year the country could hold its first free elections.

Politics today

The Namibian politics of today consists of more or less one party, South West Africa People's Organization, Swapo. The party started out as a liberation movement when Namibia was a part of South Africa and was a part of the military struggle for a liberated Namibia that started in the 1960's.

At the last national elections, in 2009, Swapo got around 75 % of the votes and a secure majority in the parliament⁸⁰. The second biggest party was Rally for Democracy and Progress (RDP), a party that is a break out of Swapo. RDP got 10 % of the total votes something that shows how large the Swapo advantage is. At the national level, Swapo is totally dominating and the situation is not totally different from the one in the neighboring country South Africa where the ANC holds the same position.

Zebra system

I mentioned in chapter 2.2 that Namibia has a quota system. In short here is how the system works in the Swapo-party according to an interview I did with the chief of the regional election committee. The grassroots of the party nominates a candidate from their district. When the election group of the local party has received all the candidates they have an election among the members of the party. In the case of Windhoek there are 15 spots to fill

⁷⁸ Guide to Namibian Politics (2008) p 6

⁷⁹ This with a lot of help from the UN and its chief negotiator Martti Ahtisaari who, when receiving the Nobel Peace prize in 2008, said that solving the situation in Namibia was his most proud moment. (SR 2008-10-02)

⁸⁰ Electoral commission of Namibia <http://www.ecn.na/Pages/home.aspx>

since there are 15 chairs in the council. The members then pick three candidates to give 1, 2 or 3 points. In this stage the electorates can choose only men or only women if they like, but according to the head of the election committee, the members have the zebra system in mind when they choose candidates.

After this there is a list of total 32 candidates. There is also a sort of inertia in how the elections committee decides who should be on the list. If you already are a councilor and you are running for re-election, you will be granted a place on the list. These ones are then put on a list by the Swapo-election committee. The use of the zebra system is used in this stage. The result is now a list of 15 candidates, men and women, who are up for election.

Appendix II: Interview guide

Why politics?

- a) Why did you decide to candidate?
- b) How was the respond from friends and family?
- c) How was the respond from the party?
- d) What questions do you feel the strongest about?

Zebra-lists:

- a) Were you the number one name on the list?
- b) What are your feelings about the zebra lists?
- c) Have you experienced any negative sides of the zebra lists?
- d) Have you experienced any positive sides of the zebra lists?
- e) Do you feel like the zebra-lists have limited your influence in any way?

Time:

- a) How much time do you spend on being a councilor?
- b) Do you feel like that you have got the same amount of time to put down on the work in the council as the other councilors?
- c) Do you feel like you have got a good balance between work – work in the council and family life?

Influence:

- a) Do you feel like you have got the same/more or less influence as the other councilors?
- b) Do you feel like that you have got a lager influence in some areas than others?
- c) Do you feel like your voice has the same importance as the other men in the council?
- d) Who would you say is the most important one in the council?

Being a woman in politics:

- a) Do you feel like that you are treated differently due to been a woman?
- b) What do you see as the biggest obstacles as a woman in the municipal council of Windhoek?
- c) How would you grant the chances that there will be a woman as a president of Namibia within a near future (5-10 years)?
- d) Do you feel like a woman has the same chances to become a councilor as a man?
- e) What advice would you give a young Swapo-woman today who wants to be in the same seat as you one day?
- f) Do you feel like the party supports men and women the same way?

Power of the Council:

- a) Do you feel like the council makes a difference in people's life?
- b) Is there anything you would like to change regarding the work in the council?