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Performances of Resistance: Women's struggle for political power in Cambodia

Mona Lilja

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Mona Lilja

Address: Dept. of Peace and Development Research Göteborg University
Box 700 SE 405 30 Göteborg Sweden
Telephone: +46-31-773 58 19
Fax: +46-31-773 49 10
Reference: Mona Lilja (e-mail: mona.lilja@padrigu.gu.se)

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the contending claims to political power in Cambodia. In particular, it discusses how politically involved women outline strategies and perform various types of resistance against the male domination of democratic arenas. Two different processes will primarily be addressed. First, the issue of *networking* will be focused on as a factor enabling women's political participation. Secondly, the paper engages in a discussion regarding how the resistance of female Cambodian politicians involves the elaboration of new *identities*.

Today, few Cambodian women hold high-ranking public positions involving decision-making. The lack of female representatives is largely due to the fact that women and men are expected to enact different gender roles. These roles are not only stereotypically divided into a political vs. apolitical identity, but the role assigned to men (political) is given more value. The social perception of women as non-political explains, to some extent, women's lack of access to political power. While this implies that women's political participation is influenced by gendered relations of power, the response to this relationship of domination not only takes the form of subordination, but also of resistance.

This analysis is based on interviews with sixty-nine Cambodian women who have taken a step towards political involvement. The agenda of these women often embraces a desire to change the power relationships which hinder women from obtaining political positions. These women are thus prime movers in processes of transformation and potential agents of change.

INTRODUCTION

The uneven representation of men and women within the political institutions of Cambodia is a striking example of the shortcomings of new democracies.[1] This paper will focus on the processes of change and the possibility of redistributing political power between men and women. The overall aim is to identify how the proportion of women in public decision-making positions may increase, thereby creating a true democratisation of supposedly democratic governance systems.[2]

The analysis will be based upon interviews with sixty-nine Cambodian women who have taken the step towards becoming involved in politics. A wide-range of women were interviewed, from grassroots activists or other women politically active at local level (governors, heads of communes, village chiefs, etc.) to national level politicians who have been members of the Cambodian Parliament or the Senate. These women are prime movers in the processes of transformation and potential agents of change. Their agenda often embraces a desire to change the power relationships that hinder women from obtaining political positions. As female pioneers within the political arena they also serve as role models for other women.

The lack of women within the sphere of politics is partly due to the fact that the common perception of what a political agent should be like - active, autonomous, publicly oriented, engaged in meeting collective and not personal needs - does not correspond to the dominant cultural ideal of femininity. In other words, stereotypical Cambodian gender roles define women as non-political, while at the same time the definition of a political identity is strongly bound to male-oriented traits. Not only are women excluded from a political role because of gender stereotypes, but a hierarchy of power has been established between men and women. While Cambodian women are stereotyped as shy, gentle, uninformed and generally narrow-minded when compared with men, they are also assigned lower status. Bo Chum Sin has investigated the issue of Cambodian women and leadership. She stated that approximately eighty-percent of her three-hundred respondents (including both men and women) believed that women are mentally weaker and less decisive than men and they therefore doubted that increasing women's political involvement would contribute anything to the public sphere.[3]
This implies that many women believe in the discourse that defines them as mentally weaker and pass on the same notions to their children, friends and others in their community. Moreover, by deferring to their sex as "weaker", women themselves are legitimising their lack of political power.[4]

Accordingly, it can be concluded that the stereotyped identities of men and women, as well as the hierarchy between the sexes, provide obstacles for women's political participation. In order for women to increase their political involvement, new social norms must be established and a new concept of a female political identity should be developed. Through negotiating and re-negotiating the discourses of gender and politics in Cambodia, the power-relations between men and women can change and space for women's political participation may be created.[5]

The focus of this paper will be how politically engaged Cambodian women build strategies and perform various types of resistance against the male domination of democratic arenas. It will investigate possible ways to eliminate gendered hierarchies of power and how to alter the stereotypes of men and women. Primarily, two different processes will be addressed. First, in Chapter Two, networking will be explored as a factor that enables women's political participation.

1 Evidently, the same problem can also be seen in old democracies.
2 I have elaborated more on the same theme in a monograph on women and politics that will be published by NIAS Press in 2006.p. 77.
3 Bo Chum S. *Women and Leadership*. Paper, Phnom Penh, 1997.p.77
4 Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
5 Ibid.

Secondly, Chapter Three discusses possible ways to change the dominant understandings regarding women, femininity and women's political identities.[6] The question of identity cannot be underestimated when discussing political activity. As part of the processes of identification, individuals may either assume or distance themselves from a political identity. They may also adopt socially constructed gender roles, or attempt to alter them in an effort to transform the dominant stereotype of what constitutes femininity and the role of women.

The different performances of resistance outlined in this paper may, by extension, provide women with increased political power and thus serve as good practices to be supported and replicated. These good practices can be of special interest to many non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as well as international development organisations, which have as one of their key objectives the creation of a fair and truly democratic governance system. The donor community in Cambodia already participates in initiatives to increase the number of women in decision-making positions, including within public administration. However, little information exists to determine the best ways to challenge the prevailing gender hierarchies and stereotypes which have resulted in the over-representation of men in decision-making positions. Only when we have knowledge regarding how to deconstruct gender hierarchies will donors be able to work in a systematic way towards a more egalitarian society. As such, this paper, as well as other contributions in the field, may be of notable policy-relevance.

This paper draws from field research that was carried out in Cambodia in 1995, mid-1997, late-1997, 1999 and 2002. Sixty-nine respondents were selected through a process of "snowballing" and included a wide-range of female politicians, from members of the Parliament or the Senate to grassroots activists. I mostly interviewed politically involved women from the three main parties, namely the Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif (FUNCINPEC), the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP).[7] In some cases, I met the same respondent several times and I also met a number of their male colleagues. A semi-structured interview was the method employed in this process of research. Interviewees were provided with the space to discuss issues they had identified as important, even though I framed the topic and formulated some of the questions.[8]

1. GENDERING THE POLITICAL CONTEXT

When asking the fundamental question of why there is a predominance of men within the political arena in Cambodia, it is essential to analyse how the dominant discourses about

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6 From an analysis of the interviews, playing with one's identities prevailed as a strategy to alter hierarchies and stereotypes. This process of identification amounts to the transformation towards an image of identity, an image that is related to Otherness (Bhabha, H. *The Location of Culture*. London and New York: Routledge 1994. p. 44–45). It is a process of imitation and repetition and a reflecting of one's self. The media is only one of the actors providing us with information, telling us how it feels to occupy a particular identity position. For example, how does it feel being the street-wise teenager, the upwardly mobile worker, or the caring parent? (Woodward, K. "Concepts of Identity and Difference". in Woodward, K. (ed) *Identity and Difference*. London: Sage, 1997. p. 14.). An individual may identify with several images. These identities mutually influence and interact with each other. In the case of women politicians, the identity position "woman" confers meaning to their identity as politicians. Not only do the identity positions permeate each other, but the different identities may have conflicting elements – one's sex, gender, political, religious or sexual identity may be co-constructed out of contradictory or conflicting discourses – thus making it difficult to gather these identities into a coherent "self". Today's Cambodian identity position of "women" repeatedly contradicts the Cambodian image of a politician. The shifting identities of women politicians are thus created in interaction with other positions of identity and in relation to the boundaries and conflicting notions of these identities (Stern, M. *Naming security-constructing identity. 'Mayan' in Guatemala on the eve of 'peace'*. Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2005. p. 32 / Woodward, K. "Concepts of Identity and Difference". in Woodward, K. (ed) *Identity and Difference*. London: Sage, 1997. p. 1-109.).
7 The interviews made in 1997 are labelled B, those made in 1999 labeled A, those from 1995 labeled C, and those from 2002 labeled E. In addition, all interviews have been given numbers.
8 The interviews have been edited for clarity. This includes removing repetition and adding prepositions. I have also omitted certain fragmented passages that were difficult to make sense of.

politics and politicians are gendered. Who is socially accepted as a decision-maker? Who is defined as a politician? Whose knowledge is seen as valuable? The aim of this chapter is to contribute to an understanding of how power-laden, gendered identities are shaped and understood in a political setting.

1.1. GENDER IN THE CAMBODIAN POLITICAL SPHERE

In Cambodia, men are generally considered to be the natural political actors. Cambodian women are seen as the bearers of their family's wealth and are very active in the economic sector.[9] A recent study among civil servants showed that, in the currently changing socio-economic situation in Cambodia, women contribute more than their husbands to the household budget.[10] However, their shouldering of economic responsibilities is not reflected in their share of space in the political arena. Judy Ledgerwood has suggested that while "Cambodian women were and are extremely active in economic affairs, it was not considered appropriate for women to be active in politics."[11] During the UN-organised "free and fair" election of 1993, only five women were elected as members of parliament from among 120 seats. Moreover, there were no female ministers or secretaries of state, although five women were appointed under-secretaries of state.[12] The number of elected women in decision-making bodies increased a little in the national election of 1998. Twelve women became members of parliament from among 122 seats. Also, after the 2003 election women received twelve seats in the National Assembly.[13] In the newly created senate, there are eight women from a total of sixty-one.[14]

The differences between men and women, which easily slide into stereotypes, have been pointed out as one of the contributing causes of the unequal distribution of political power.[15] The hierarchical relationship of power between men and women can also be seen as a key factor in preventing women from obtaining political power. According to Yvonne Hirdman, a gender hierarchy is created as the hidden, unintended, but often inevitable outcome of the pattern of placing masculinity and femininity - as well as men and women - into a dichotomy.[16] Binary thinking and the hierarchies that it nourishes are transmitted and reaffirmed in everything from the design of cars to our daily conversations.

In the context of Cambodia, women are regarded as having problems in learning about and analysing the world. Negative comments about women's capabilities are often made with reference to women's inability to leave the household sphere and gain an understanding of the public world. Women are thus seen as having a "mental weakness."

> Women in Cambodian society are seen as inferior to men. They are considered mentally weaker. This view is stronger in the rural areas than in the towns. Women are not equals. Men see themselves as the intelligent actors.[17]

[9] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[10] CRD/KWVC.
Gender Equality and Equity, Viewing Women Civil Servants' Access to Mid-Level Positions in a Socio-Economic Mutation Context of Cambodia (draft report). Phnom Penh: CRD, 1999. p. 25.
[11] Ledgerwood, J. "Analysis of the Situation of Women in Cambodia". Paper. Phnom Penh, 1992. p. 15.
[12] Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs. *Women: Key to National Reconstruction.* Phnom Penh: Secretariat of State for Women's Affairs, 1995.
[13]The kingdom of Cambodia webpage: http://www.cambodia.gov.kh/unisql1/egov/english/organ.assembly.html
[14] The senate of Cambodia, homepage: http://www.senate.gov.kh/02-04-99a.htm
[15] Elofsson, K. "Demokratins fördjupning: ett genderperspektiv". in Göran Hyden (ed) *Demokratisering i tredje världen.* Lund: Studentlitteratur 1998. p. 77-80 Peterson, S. and Runyan, A. *Global Gender Issues.* Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993. Kabeer, N. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought.* London: Verso, 1994.
[16] Hirdman, Y. "Genussystemet: reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning" ["The gender system: reflections on women's social subordination."] in *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift.* No. 3, pp. 49–63. Stockholm, 1988.
[17] Interview No. 13B.

> We cannot take full responsibility; we are only women. Women always speak out less than the men. The men seem to dominate the women. We feel afraid to speak out and when we speak out we feel afraid that what we say is wrong because women don't know how to speak… Girls are weaker than boys, mentally weaker.[18]

> Both men and women believe that women are mentally weaker than men.[19]

These quotations from interviewees indicate that a gender hierarchy has been internalised by women. Through communicating internalised "truths" about their lack of ability, the women reproduce hierarchical and stereotyped images of themselves, so that the traditional gender roles remain intact.[20] Those who occupy the lowest rung on the hierarchical ladder often play a part in sustaining the discourses that keep them there.[21] Both men and women uphold the gendered organisation of society, where activities, places, symbols, lifestyles and the distribution of resources are all marked by the division and construction of gender.[22]

That Cambodian women are assigned low status has a large impact upon the political sphere. Even though a recent study shows that a majority of Cambodians say that they would like to see more women as members of the National Assembly, the interviews show a more complex pattern. They point out how both women and men question women's ability to behave properly as political actors.[23] Instead, women are encouraged to obey their husbands, carry out household tasks and respect their parents.[24] As in many other societies, the political sphere is a masculine realm and politicians are often assumed to be men and/or bearers of masculine traits.

According to Nanda Pok of the organisation Women for Prosperity, Cambodian women and men alike long for a strong leader, albeit one with a big heart.[25] From this statement it follows that the image of a politician that is being created is a masculine one. As strength is widely regarded as being a masculine characteristic, the stereotypical woman does not fit this image of an ideal politician.[26]

That the political realm is imbued with masculine imagery and associations is expressed in additional ways. For example, at a workshop on the theme of "Women and Politics", the participants attempted to identify the strengths of Cambodian women, agreeing that women "have the same capacity *as a man*", a notion that was also reflected within other interviews:[27]

[18] Interview No. 1E.

[19] Interview No. 17B.

[20] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.

[21] Hall (1997) states that "Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster or formation of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society". The concept of discourse thus provides us with an understanding of the production of "shared meanings", which makes people who belongs to the same society interpret the world in roughly the same way, and express themselves, their feelings and thoughts, in ways that will be understood by each other.

[22] Hirdman, Y. "Genussystemet: reflexioner kring kvinnors sociala underordning" ["The gender system: reflections on women's social subordination."] in *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*. No. 3, pp. 49–63. Stockholm, 1988. Holm, U. *Modrande och Praxis*. Göteborg: Daidalos,1993. IDEA *Women in Parliament: Beyond Numbers*. Stockholm. 1998. Kabeer, N. *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*. London: Verso, 1994. Mies M. Bennholdt-Thomsen V. and Von Werlhof C. *Women: The Last Colony*. London and New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd, 1988. Peterson, S. and Runyan, A. *Global Gender Issues*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993.
Thurén, B. "Om styrka, räckvidd och hierarki, samt andra genusteoretiska begrepp." ["About strength, reach and hierarchy and other gender theoretical concepts."]. in *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*. No. 3-4. Umeå: Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift, 1996.

[23] The Asia Foundation. *Democracy in Cambodia 2003: A Survey of the Cambodian Electorate, Draft 16 May 2003*. Phnom Penh: The Asia Foundation, 2003.

[24] Derks, A. "Perspective on Gender in Cambodia: Myths and Realities". in *Cambodia Report: A Publication of the Center for Advanced Study*, Vol. 11, No. 3, pp. 6–10. Phnom Penh: Center for Advanced Study, 1996.

[25] Nanda Pok, Women for Prosperity (an NGO dealing with women's political rights), personal communication, Phnom Penh, May 1999.

[26] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.

[27] WMC (Women's Media Centre). *Report from Workshop on Women and Politics*. Phnom Penh: Women's Media Centre, 1997.

> [...] women need to have more education and more experience than men, to become the same function.[28]

> You see? We don't have the same salary. *We can do the same work as the men can do*, but we don't get the same salary.[29]

Men are thus seen as the standard when discussing the role of a politician. The fact that men are viewed as natural politicians designates positions of power exclusively to men. Thus when studying democratic political arenas, it is imperative to analyse the relationship between formal, public decision-making processes and the hidden, naturalised stereotypes that exists regarding women, men and politics.

In summary, gender stereotypes and hierarchies prevent many women from occupying positions of political power. While the gender hierarchy places women last, the stereotyped images of men and women limit the possibilities, identities and space for action of both men and women. Therefore it is important to emphasise that stereotypical gender roles and identities also serve to oppress men.[30] However, when I asked Cambodian women (in three different provinces) to respond to the questions: "What is a man?" and "What is a woman?" the latter question was answered more easily and consistently.[31] While women were usually described as being shy, honest, humble, gentle, active, hard working, thrifty and uninformed, men were pictured in a more diverse and fragmented manner. For example, some women stated that men were intelligent and knowledgeable, whereas others described them as being constantly drunk. Some emphasised that men were hard working, strong and active, while others felt that they had a lot of time on their hands.[32] The interviews thus indicate that there may be a greater number of identity positions and/or discourses for men to assume. The understanding of men and masculinity seems to be less homogeneous, stereotyped and streamlined than the female equivalent. For women, on the other hand, positions of identification, the "what to be", seem in many cases to be more clearly defined and the options fewer. The room for maneuvering is more limited, with the female identity kept within stricter boundaries.[33] It is in light of this tendency that Hanna Papanek points out how the disciplining of women into strictly feminine coded behaviour is often rationalised through reference to dangerous, "uncontrollable" men.[34] In other words, the fact that men have more variety of masculine roles that they can assume can be related to the restriction and domestication of women.

1.2. KEEPING CAMBODIAN WOMEN OUT OF POLITICS: SOCIAL VIOLENCE AND GENDER ROLES

The gap between the image of a leader and the cultural representation of a feminine identity is partly related to Cambodian women's relationship to violence and suffering. The history of Cambodia carries with it memories of massive killing and destruction. Not only was Cambodia drawn into the Indochina war during the 1960s - between 1969 and 1973, 700,000 people were killed in Cambodia when the USA sought to destroy North Vietnamese troops entering the country from Vietnam[35] - but in the period that followed, the Communist Khmer Rouge gained ground and seized power in 1975. They forced the Cambodians into farming collectives

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[28] Interview No. 13A.
[29] Interview No. 1A.
[30] Faludi, S. *The Betrayal of the Modern Man*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1999.
[31] Norrlind, M. "Kvinnor och bistånd: en landsbygdsstudie från Kambodja" ["Women and aid: a study of the rural areas of Cambodia"]. Paper. Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1996. p. 22.
[32] Norrlind, M. "Kvinnor och bistånd: en landsbygdsstudie från Kambodja" ["Women and aid: a study of the rural areas of Cambodia"]. Paper. Göteborg: Göteborg University, 1996.
[33] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[34] Papanek, H. "The Ideal Woman and the Ideal Society: Control and Autonomy in the Construction of Identity." in Moghadam M. V. (ed) *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective*. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1994.
[35] Curtis, G. *Cambodia: A Country Profile*. Stockholm: Sida, 1990. p. 12–14.

in an attempt to create an agrarian utopia and, before Vietnam invaded the country in 1979, more than two million people died of starvation, overwork, disease and executions.[36]

The next period of violence occurred in 1997 when Hun Sen (CPP), the Second Prime Minister at that time, ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh from power in a military coup. Nonetheless, the election was held and Cambodia entered into a new phase of stability. Unfortunately, it did not last very long. The UN Commission for Human Rights expressed concern, in its May 2003 resolution (E/CN.4/2003/L.81), regarding violations of human rights and political violence in Cambodia, especially regarding the killing of political activists in the run-up to the 2003 election.[37]

The Cambodian past has thus been marked by violence. There are at least two ways in which gendered relationships have interacted with violence to construct men as political actors and women as non-political. First, Cambodian men are brought up understanding that it is the responsibility of men to aid and protect the "weaker" sex, which is in need of guardianship. As women are considered shy and vulnerable, as well as easily manipulated and led by temptation, the belief is that they must be protected.[38] As political action has historically been associated with the risk of violence, the stereotyping of women as fragile and not able to cope with the repercussions of engaging in politics is another barrier preventing women from entering into the political realm:

> Women can't bear violence. They cannot lead and are too busy with their families.[39]

> A big problem with women and politics is that women are not able to live by themselves in town.[40]

> [women in politics are] easily frightened, are not brave, suffer from much oppression and can be selfish.[41]

This image of the frightened woman in need of protection is strengthened in times of fear. Under insecure conditions, the need for protection and defense means that leaders are held responsible for local and national security, and the defenders – leaders, guards and soldiers – are all men. As a result of both a history of violence and strict gender roles, masculinity, violence and security have all become essential parts of the image of a politician. While men are considered the representatives of the public domain whose role it is to provide security and face violence; women are assigned a more passive and timid role. As women are not seen as fitting the image of the protector, the political sphere becomes a bastion of men and the recruitment of women to that arena becomes problematic. One female village chief recounted the difficulties of being a woman leader:

> There is conflict in the village, and sometimes as a woman it's difficult
> to organise the guard at night... For a male head of village it's easier
> than a female, because of transportation and security. It's easier to
> leave home. Sometimes at night, in the daytime... And also another
> family member told me, "Please stop, because you're a woman.
> Please stay at home at night, not go around the village".[42]

[36] Ibid. p. 6-7.
[37] Mailing-List: hy@un.org, camnews@cambodia.org, from: "Supharidh Hy", 1 May 2003 09:15:06.
[38] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[39] Interview No. 11B.
[40] Interview No. 12B.
[41] Women's Media Centre (WMC). *Report from Workshop on Women and Politics.* Phnom Penh: Women's Media Centre, 1997.
[42] Interview No. 14A.

Another woman emphasised the connections between the role of leader and that of a guard or soldier carrying arms:

> At that time I was appointed by the government at the provincial level. They want me because of my education, reputation and how I worked. They wanted to see me become the head of the commune, but at that time, as head of a commune, I would have to have a gun in my hand. At that time it was unsafe in my village and all over the commune, but it is not good for me to have a gun in my hand.[43]

In contrast to the characteristics associated with masculinity, fear is seen as a "natural" characteristic of Cambodian women. Imbedded in men and women's different gender identity is thus the question of how to react to insecurity. The socialisation of women towards a traditional female gender role makes it difficult for women to take on leadership positions. Seen as those in need of protection, the idea of women as protectors becomes a cultural paradox. As they are considered weak and anxious, it is legitimate for women to avoid danger; they are therefore expected to stay out of politics. Even though Cambodia is moving from violence toward becoming a more stable society, instability still remains.

A second justification used to explain why women should avoid the insecurity of political engagement, is that women should prioritise the domestic sphere. The division of responsibilities runs along traditional gender lines, with many women prevented from engaging in politics by domestic duties and responsibilities assigned to them. As a female politician asserted:

> To be a politician, you must be brave. You put your life at risk. You are gambling with your life. If you do not want to risk your life for a worthy cause, stay out of politics. Women do not want to risk their lives since they are responsible for their children. Who will take care of the children if she dies? The man? Hardly![44]

In times of insecurity, it is difficult to combine domestic duties (care for the elderly, children, animals, etc.) with one's participation in public life. The two are viewed as incompatible because threats and violence form an integral part of what it means to be a politician. Most likely this contributes to the strengthening of the division between the responsibilities that are assigned to men and women respectively.

1.3. IDEALS OF THE SUPERIOR FEMALE POLITICIAN vs. THE MALE POLITICAL NORM

The prior analysis of gender and Cambodian politics discussed various obstacles to women's political participation. One of the obstacles mentioned is the low-status of women. There seems to be a clear, often internalised, boundary between the stereotypes of intelligent, worldly, educated men and the uneducated, mentally weaker, gentle, uninformed women. Simultaneously, the existence of an alternative discourse can be gleaned from the interviews which positions women as good political leaders. Whether this is shared by Cambodian society in general has yet to be seen, but some of the women leaders interviewed stated that women make better leaders than men. These interviewees used terms such as responsible, capable, good speakers, understandable and brilliant leaders to refer to female politicians. In general, women were described as active, strong and knowledgeable. From this point of view, stereotypical gender roles can be utilised as an argument for women's political acumen by redefining and expanding the role of leaders as protectors. Women's domestic responsibilities can be seen as advantageous since they imply that women have a clearer understanding of issues such as poverty and education.

[43] Interview No. 13A.

[44] Interview No. 11B.

> A good leader is a person with his/her heart in the right place and with an education. If women get an education they are better leaders than men, as they know more than men and have their heart in the right place.[45]

Accounts such as this one prevailed among a number of female NGO workers as well as female politicians. They offer a new alternative "invented" image that refuses to occupy the lowest rung on the hierarchical ladder. Interestingly enough, while many respondents stated that women are superior to men as leaders, in the interviews the same women expressed a contrary notion, in which men's performances were seen as the norm. The interviewees expressed this in different ways:

> ... they say that *women manage better than men*. That's because if they [women] are educated, if they control the household, then they [women] are better because we transfer our skills. [...] You know, women can be *leaders like men*, but if you talk about politicians, the truth here is that women are not born to be politicians [emphasis added].[46]

> No, no, no...some of them [female politicians] make a very good speech. Capable of stirring a whole crowd. *Better than men, you know ...* We don't have the same salary. We can *do the same work as the men* can do, but we don't get the same salary [emphasis added].[47]

These quotations show how male politicians are placed as the political norm that female politicians ought to adapt to ("We can *do the same work as* the men [emphasis added]"). However, the very same quotations simultaneously states that women are better politicians than men ("them [female politicians] make a very good speech. Capable of stirring a whole crowd. *Better than men, you know* [emphasis added]"). Thus the quotations reveal women's attempts to combine two distinct discourses: women as superior and men as natural politicians. The quotes show how the women feel torn between different values expressed in Cambodian society. Another interpretation may be that the social norm of male politicians is deeply internalised from childhood while the image of the excellent female politician is a more recent, perhaps feminist alternative. In other words, the alternative image of a capable female politician is perhaps a less deep-seated, recently invented "truth" that contradicts the deeply internalised gender roles that women continue to carry. The fact that the women keep repeating the new image of a superior female politician may be because they feel uncomfortable, and want to resist the discourse of politics as a masculine arena. In this case, maintaining the alternative image of women as superior politicians can be seen as a strategy of resistance against the hierarchy of power between men and women.

This line of argument is strengthened by the fact that the interviewees described the image of the superior female politician in very vague terms. When women were referred to as superior and knowledgeable politicians, it was not with reference to actual politicians. Neither did they talk about themselves as being superior politicians. The women tried to promote the political identity of women but without mentioning that they themselves belonged to that category. Instead the description had a more general, theoretical character. Through these generalisations, the interviewees avoided directly challenging their internalised subaltern identity, while still managing to reshape the prevailing notion of femininity and resist the common stereotypes regarding female politicians. The image of the superior female politician thus prevails as a resistance strategy, an attempt to create an alternative image that contradicts the dominant ideas regarding the male political norm.

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[45] Interview No. 4B.
[46] Interview No. 2A.
[47] Interview No. 1A.

1.4. THE POLITICS OF FAMILY NETWORKS

An analysis of women's political participation must include the private sphere and more specifically the influential role of the family. In the case of Cambodia, the family's position and extensive network seems to have contributed to increased political possibilities for the women interviewed. In fact, family networks seem to have created political possibilities for women in at least two regards. First of all, some women experienced that their family identity was emphasised while their gender was ignored and that they had been granted political power due to their family's position within the village network. In this sense, a system of patron-client relations has created political possibilities for a number of women. Secondly, the identity of the loyal, domestic-oriented wife has also occasionally provided women with political power.

Before the Khmer Rough era, peasant society and local decision-making processes in Cambodia were steered by so called patron-client relations. According to Jan Ovesen, such a relationship should be seen as threefold. It is dyadic as it involves two parts: vertical, as the patron is positioned hierarchically above the client and, finally, multi-stranded i.e. the relationship pertains to more than one sphere of life (economic, social and political). The obligation of the patron is to offer physical protection, economic assistance, as well as moral support in times of need. In return the patron is given political loyalty and occasional labour supply.[48]

Patron-client relations appear to be highly prevalent within the current political system of Cambodia.[49] Today, there is a general lack of interest in the different political and ideological party programs in Cambodia, with patron-client relationships continuing to determine voting patterns. For example, in the 1993 and 1998 elections, the Khmers voted to "ensure a leader would reward them for their loyalty in much the same way as they would under the traditional khsae networks" (khsae being the string of mutual gift exchange from the elite in return for loyalty from villagers).[50] Though citizens in many countries vote for the candidate who holds the most promise of improving their personal situation, often they do not expect to see an immediate increase in the material welfare of their community.

For this reason, the liberal western democratic system of today's Cambodia is highly influenced by traditional decision-making structures of patron-client relations. The impact of patron-client relations on the democratic system has enabled some women to gain political positions, starting at the village level. During the years the Khmer Rouge dominated Cambodian society, many patron-families were largely exterminated, and in general more men than women were killed. In the aftermath of the war a number of women from traditionally dominant upper-class families returned to their home villages as the sole survivors. As the patron-client relation was restored and re-established, some women suddenly found themselves in the position of being village leaders. For example, one female politician recalled how she returned to her village, within her family of forty people, only she and her sister were still alive. The villager's support became the starting-point of her political career at the communal level:

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[48] Ovesen, J. Trankell, I. and Öjendal, J. *When Every Household is an Island*. Stockholm: Uppsala Research Reports in Cultural Anthropology, 0348-9507; 15. 1996. p. 70 – 71.

[49] Several respondents interviewed in 2002 stated that they expected FUNCINPEC to gain less votes in the 2003 election, as they had failed to donate to the village's schools, bridges or make any other contributions while the CPP did. Similar to this, one member of the parliament of FUNCINPEC complained that she was given no means to support or make contributions to her voters. She added that trying to make contact with the voters was of no use, as long she had no money contributing physically to the villages. Yet another woman said: "You must have a lot of money to run as a candidate. In other countries people give money to the candidate but in Cambodia it is the opposite. The candidate must have a lot of money. You must give money to the people to have them to listen" (Interview No. 4B).

[50] Roberts, D. W. *Political transition in Cambodia 1991-99: Power, Elitism and Democracy*. Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001. p. 204.

> I had a better reputation (than the other candidates). Besides my education, my parents used to help everyone, and those people remembered my parents. When my parents weren't alive anymore they supported the children instead.[51]

Social networks in terms of family ties and patron-client relations have thus been an important path to positions of power for a number of women. However, importance placed on the family can also work as a hindrance; one well-educated Khmer woman stated that she failed to become politically successful due to her lack of family networks.[52]

As previously mentioned, it is not only patron-client relations that open up space for women's political participation. Family relations also seem to steer political participation in Cambodia:

> I don't see any woman you know, who are in San Rainsy Party for example and the husband in Hun Sen Party or something. Both of them, husband and wife, are in the same political party.[53]

There are probably many additional explanations as to why political participation is a family affair in Cambodia. One may approach this issue by asking in what ways female politicians in Cambodia make sense out of their double identities as women as well as politicians.[54] This double identity exists in light of the previously discussed strict division of gender roles, where masculine attributes are thought to be necessary in order to protect and defend national security and women are seen as domestic beings in need of protection because of their weak and fragile nature.[55] However, these gender roles can also be seen as complementary to each other; while men deal with external issues of security and violence, women focus on internal social issues such as poverty, health and education. This resonates with the classical Victorian discourse that maintains that women bring fairness, peacefulness and humanity into the political field, while simultaneously implying that men don't.

From this analysis, one may draw the conclusion that the symbolism attached to politically active wives may complement and enhance the image of the male politician. Together, the wife and husband may compose a more complete political unit with the capacity to secure the nation's needs both internally and externally. To bring their wives into politics may thus be a way for husbands to add soft values such as honesty and peacefulness to their image without losing any masculinity in the process. This may be one of the key reasons that politician's wives and daughters become politically active.

Ironically enough, the fact that these wives adopt an obedient and docile female identity, seems to make it possible for them to act as active and independent female subjects in the political sphere. The image of women as passive and loyal includes following their men to the political field were they are expected to inhabit various positions. Women have to take on an active role in order to gain status as obedient "objects." In other words, the gendered expectations of wives as docile and assigning the family a central role, encourage women to become public non-family oriented political actors. For example, one female politician explained why she became politically involved after the collapse of the Pol Pot regime in 1979:

[51] Interview No. 13A.
[52] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[53] Interview No. 1A.
[54] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[55] Anderson, B. *Imagined communities* (Revised edition). London-New York: Verso, 1983. Enloe, C. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics.* London: Pandora Press, 1989. p. 54.

> I never wanted to become politically active. I had my children, my life in France. But my husband decided that he should travel to China and join the exile regime. What was I to do? Stay by myself in France? No, we Cambodian women are very family-oriented. So I went with him to China and became politically active.[56]

Despite the specific manner in which women come to participate in politics through family ties and village networks, there are a number of serious implications that follow. First of all, the distribution of political power along family ties undermines the ideal of democracy as a means of solving conflicts of interest in society, because interest, ideologies and party programs are given secondary importance in relation to the weight attached to family loyalties and connections. Secondly, it questions the distinction made in many liberal democracies between the public and the private sphere.[57] As has been addressed, in the context of Cambodia this division is just an illusion, which makes it important for researchers to focus on both spheres. Thirdly, due to the family-oriented recruitment to the political arena, researchers as well as practitioners within the political field in Cambodia must critically view the idea of an abstract political actor and engage in more complex analysis of the role and impact of different identities in terms of family ties, gender, class and ethnicity.[58] This will provide us with more nuanced research in the field of power and politics, which will most likely contribute to improved policy recommendations.

1.5. CONTRADICTING IDENTITIES: TO BE FEMALE OR TO BE A POLITICIAN

As discussed earlier, the lack of female politicians is partly due to the fact that the Cambodian definition of a political agent does not blend well with cultural expectations of feminine behaviour. How then do the female politicians themselves try to handle the fact that their gender identities do not correspond with the general ideal of a politician? When female politicians in Cambodian discuss how to be and act in the political arena it seems that they try, first and foremost, to relate to the different expectations placed on them to behave as "women" or as "politicians".

We are all expected to fulfill different roles and abide by different standards. For example, being born female we are expected to "think" and "act" in manners that correspond to the common understandings of how and what a woman is. Women normally try to live up to these expectations because a system of social punishments and rewards tends to keep us in line. Common punishments include penalties in the form of dislike, low status, being regarded as an outsider, a differing other – if we do not act in accordance with social expectations. In other words, punishments are handed out to those who fail to correspond to the norm.[59] On the other hand, when embracing all the "right" qualities, we are often rewarded through love, respect, status, etc. Rewards are given to the individuals whose behaviour corresponds to the current cultural norm. These processes of socialisation takes place with all different types of identities. Whereas woman politicians may successfully fit into the female mold, as politicians they are now socially pressured into taking on different modes of being in accordance with the image of a politician. This process is reflected in the words of certain Cambodian female politicians, who argued that women must cease cultivating stereotypically female characteristics - such as being quiet and gentle - and adapt themselves to the outspoken norm of a politician. One female member of the National Assembly said:

> Women must change themselves to fit the National Assembly. Women are too shy and timid. That is why they have a lower status than men. Women must be stronger and more outspoken.[60]

[56] Interview No. 1A.
[57] Phillips, A. *Närvarons politik: den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras.* [The politics of presence: political representations of sex, ethnicity and race]. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000.
[58] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[59] Foucault, M. Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison. London: Penguin Books, 1975.
[60] Interview No. 9B.

This quotation displays how women politicians are aware of the necessity to downplay femininity through arguing that women must abandon certain feminine traits and adopt a more frank and extrovert identity. However, the contrary view was also expressed. Some of the interviewees focused on femininity and argued that women must behave "properly" also within the political sphere. Yet others used the rhetoric of both arguments and seemingly alternated between the two different viewpoints. For example, one woman told me that female politicians ought to behave in a "proper" female manner, that is, they should be gentle and speak in a low voice. However, later on the same woman pointed out that:

> Women are quiet because they are shy. Men don't like it when women are "chatty". Women are raised to respect men and be quiet. This is the case with women in the National Assembly. Women in the National Assembly never use their rights or their ability one-hundred percent.[61]

This quotation reveals how this woman is aware of the trap that trying to uphold feminine ideals as a politician results in the loss of rights and ability. She seems torn between espousing the feminine ideal and realising what a hindrance it can be. It shows how the ideals of femininity and that of being a good politician can contradict one another. This tends to create a confusing mix of punishments and rewards. For example, while the woman quoted above may gain rewards in terms of appreciation and status in the public arena for being outspoken and loud, this goes against the system of punishments and rewards that marks the identification process for women. Thus, it is possible to receive both punishments and rewards for the very same performance. One female politician described how she is perceived:

> Sometimes, when you do like this (gesture of speaking), everyone looks at you: "so brave, so intelligent" but not so nice to be around. … Are you single too; no one will ask you to marry "Oh I'm scared of a woman like that".[62]

Hence, when the female politician succeeded in gaining a new outspoken identity, new problems emerged. Suddenly she no longer corresponded to the prevailing female image. Differing from the female norm created renewed confusion, as well as scepticism. At the same time, both punishments and rewards were simultaneously distributed for the same achievement, as the woman politician failed to correspond with the image of a woman but succeeded in corresponding with the norm of a (male) politician. Being judged simultaneously regarding two conflicting images of identity may thus manifest itself in contradictory and paradoxical reactions.

Perhaps the problem is not the contradiction between existing images but the lack of another image, an alternative position of identity of a female politician. As yet, there is no such category in which to place a woman who is a politician. There are no images, no ideas regarding how a female politician may be, how she behaves, etc. This creates confusion, not only for the female politician herself but also for the voters. One female politician said:

> In one way it is an advantage to be a woman. People just don't believe that women can be politicians. Therefore everyone comes to listen to you. They want to see how a female candidate acts. They think, "Is it possible? Can a woman really be a politician?"[63]

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[61] Interview No. 12B.
[62] Interview No. 16A.

[63] Interview No. 4B.

1.6. CONCLUSIONS

In this first chapter I have established that there is a hierarchy between male and female identities, in which women are often defined as weaker both physically and mentally, while men are given greater status and associated with the role of politician. I have also discussed the separation between the men and women, as well as predominant stereotypical femininity and masculinity in Cambodia. Stereotypes reduce, essentialise, naturalise and fix complex social patterns and ignore interdependence. For example, Cambodian women are often described as uninformed, easily scared and stupid. The most striking thing is that this stereotype is so widespread, that there seem to be few other options of female identities to adopt.

The divide between women as non-political and men as political has been strengthened by the fact that the violent history of Cambodia has added to the image of leadership needing to encompass strength, the bearing of arms and providing security. The image of the politician in some senses has come to overlap with the responsibilities of soldiers or guardians, both traditionally male roles. Cambodia's past has thus reinforced women's positions as outsiders in the political arena by prioritising a leader's ability to provide security. The risk of being exposed to violence also results in fewer women entering the public sphere. In many cases, this is due to the impossibility of uniting the dangers of politics with the responsibility of the domestic sphere including caring for the elderly, children and animals.

Due to gender stereotypes, women thus have very limited choices of identity positions and are measured against this stereotype of the feminine norm. This reduces women's chance to recognise themselves and be acknowledged by others, as leaders. Therefore, many experience a vacant space with no existing images of politically active women. Because of the heavy weight of identity issues, it is not to be seen as strange that there is an ongoing discussion among politicians as to how female leaders ought to behave. Some women try to embody the norms associated with male politicians, while others behave in line with the traditional image of women but in a new arena: the political sphere.

2. NETWORKING AS RESISTANCE AND A MEANS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

The concept of networks has been broadly used within the social sciences to illustrate various types of coalitions that form within realms of power and resistance to power.[64] For example, power in terms of decision-making at the national and/or global level in political, economic or cultural organisations are resisted by individuals, groups, organisations or movements using various kinds of actions. There exist tens of thousands of critical social organisations around the world, as well as the less visible but seemingly stronger mobilisation of people in informal networks of transnational movements.[65] Those who share similar identities often engage in networking. These networks range from formal institutionalised structures, to informal personal networks - loosely maintained constellations.

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[64] Baylis, J. & Smith, S. (ed). *The Globalization of World Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997. Bredgaard, T. *Corporate Social Responsibility Between Public Policy and Enterprise Policy*, The Role of Trade Unions in Corporate Social Responsibility Initiatives. Aalborg: CARMA, Aalborg University, 2003. Chin, C. "The State of The "State" in Globalization: Social Order and Economic Restructuring in Malaysia." in *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, No. 6, pp. 1035-1057. Carfax Publishing Company, 2000. Eriksson, C. Eriksson-Baaz, M. and Thörn, H. *Globaliseringens kulturer*. Nora: Nya Doxa, 1999. O'Brien, R. Goetz, A. Scholte, J. A. & Williams, M. *Contesting Global Governance – Multilateral Economic Institutions and Global Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
Richter, J. *Holding Corporations Accountable: Corporate Conduct, International Codes and Citizen Action*. London: Zed Books, 2001.

[65] Smith, J. and Johnston, H. (ed) *Globalization and Resistance – Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2002.

In Cambodia, various forms of networking are engaged in by female politicians, both as a resistance strategy, as well as enabling women to exercise political power. Among other strategies: networking abroad; within the village; with other women; among female politicians; within political parties; or family networking, are all phenomena that contribute to women's political participation.

Networking within political parties especially seems to affect women's political participation. FUNCINPEC, as well as the Sam Rainsy Party, seem to have the ambition to network in order to create grassroots women's movements along party lines. Another pattern can be seen in the political party CPP. In the eighties, the State of Cambodia SOC (the former CPP) had as part of its organisation the Revolutionary Association of Women that claimed over 1.8 million female members.[66] However, this massive organisation was dissolved as a part of the country's overall political evolution. Lately, CPP, at least verbally, has begun to stress women's issues again. Among the initiatives that have been put forward was a plan to ensure that at least thirty percent of CPP candidates in the local 2000 polls were women.[67] In spite of this, CPP seems to have failed to include a new generation of women in the party. They have a few women working in the National Assembly; at their office we were told that only six CPP staff members are women and out of these, five hold positions as either secretaries or cleaners. Moreover, the CPP seems to lack the kind of active women's movement encouraged and instituted by both FUNCINPEC and the Sam Rainsy Party. Below, the relevance and impact of female movements and networks will be discussed.

2.1. NETWORKING TO ACCESS CORRECT KNOWLEDGE

In this section, I will argue that female networks provide women politicians with the knowledge needed to compete for political power. For women to gain legitimacy and power and advance as political actors they must prevail as knowledgeable actors. In the process of establishing themselves as skilled and capable, they must relate to the context and worldview of their audiences. This is essential, as in order to make sense and impress one's listeners or audience, one must possess a form of knowledge – a manner of talking - that accords with theirs. Speeches or words are interpreted and understood from the perspective or knowledge of the listener. Therefore, it is vital to first define who the key recipients of knowledge are - the "target audience." Secondly, to adapt the facts/opinions and how they are presented so that they make sense to these specific listeners. One must be able to present oneself as knowledgeable to that specific group.[68] For example, one female politician argued that it is important to learn how to speak and what to say in the National Assembly before actually doing it:

> You see, even they [female members of parliament] don't speak …
> in the presence of men or in public life, or big like that, they [female
> politicians] hesitate. Take me as an example: with my staff or with
> the people I speak a lot, but in the Assembly I have to think a lot
> before. Women very much like thinking before they do anything…
> you must have a very large knowledge, general knowledge, before
> you talk. So from my experience, I have to study the administrative.
> If you talk in the Assembly making nonsense, you can get nothing
> for the session, but you lose confidence. So, for me myself I won't
> talk. It is a new world for me.[69]

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[66] Curtis, G. *Cambodia: A Country Profile*. Stockholm: Sida, 1990. p. 165 – 166.
[67] The Straits Times, Tue, 29 Jun 1999 sent from mailing-list: ngoforum@camnet.com.kh.
[68] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[69] Interview No. 16A.

For the female politicians who were interviewed, the appointees and the power brokers of the political sphere are of great significance. In order for women politicians to advance they need to have access to the knowledge and communication methods of powerful male politicians, specifically those with the power of appointment. However, in order to appear knowledgeable and impress these men, many women experienced that they must have, as the quotation expresses: "very large knowledge." Women are afraid of speaking "nonsense" because then "you can get nothing for the session, but you lose confidence." This implies that those who speak in the "right" manner, have the "right" education and the "right" knowledge, are rewarded in terms of appreciation and may obtain access to decision-making power.[70] However, if you fail to comprehend and replicate the established political discourse you may be put to shame and lose confidence. Thus, to obtain access to political power, subalterns must not only obtain access to the different "truths" regarding "political skills", but also be able to mimic an established political discourse and match what is defined and labeled as "intellectual capacity".

This hierarchy of knowledge and behaviours is not commonly discussed or questioned; instead it seems that many researchers dwell on regretting the "poor knowledge" of vulnerable or marginalised groups. This attitude is demonstrated by Mark Robinson who describes an attempt in India to balance power in favour of the poor, arguing that at meetings, "the villagers rarely had the technical knowledge or educational skills required of them to perform this role effectively."[71] Expressed differently, the villagers had not been socialised into or trained regarding what was considered the proper political and middle to upper-class manners of talking and expressing opinions. Thus, poor and disadvantaged groups are prevented from participating in political life because of factors such as their low level of educational achievement. Ultimately, educated (male) elites obtain access to power and resources, while the poor and disadvantaged are constrained by "structural and behavioural factors."[72] This goes against the most fundamental principles of democracy, namely that it is the people who ought to make the decisions, and that decision-making should to be equally distributed among them.[73]

Networking prevails as an important strategy in the vital search to possess and use the same knowledge and communication methods as those in power. In order to know the hot, up-to-date topics and get access to the right information, one must have access to the networks in which this knowledge is being produced, presented and discussed. But where are the arenas and networks where communication norms and hot topics are produced and decisions taken? Some interviewees mentioned seminars and workshops as places where knowledge circulates and where women could increase their "awareness."[74] Also, bars and brothels were brought up as places where men spend time networking, taking decisions, creating boundaries and reaching consensus:

> Men they always meet each other and then they drink wine and then something to eat. [Then they talk] about the party, so secret information. Women do not do that.[75]

> One problem is that men make all the decisions at the pub or in brothels. Informal. To those places women can't come. It was in the brothels that the lists of the candidates were decided in 1993.[76]

[70] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[71] Robinson, M. "Democracy, Participation, and Public Policy: The Politics of Institutional Design". in Robinson, M. and White, G. (ed) *The Democratic Developmental State: Politics and Institutional Design.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 181.
[72] Robinson, M. "Democracy, Participation, and Public Policy: The Politics of Institutional Design". in Robinson, M. and White, G. (ed) *The Democratic Developmental State: Politics and Institutional Design.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. p. 103.
[73] Phillips, A. *Närvarons politik: den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras.* [The politics of presence: political representations of sex, ethnicity and race]. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000.
[74] Interview No. 11A.
[75] Interview No. 12A.
[76] Interview No. 18A.

For women, many of the arenas mentioned above are closed due to cultural reasons. Generally women are restricted from acting in arenas strongly associated with masculinity. Hence the problem is not only that there is a relation of power between the sexes, where forms of behaviour and knowledge associated with male politicians have higher status; many of these women also lack access to knowledge of how to behave/know/talk as the norm. This is partially due to the fact that they are excluded from essential networks where knowledge is produced and circulated.[77]

As stated above, to be able to obtain a high-ranking position, women first need to gain access to the different "truths" concerning how to behave and what to know as a trustworthy politician. Secondly, they must learn to correspond to this image. The problem is thus double-edged. There is a relation of power based on the hierarchy of knowledge and characteristics associated with the two sexes and it is difficult for women gain access to the image needed to climb this hierarchy, since they don't have access to many male-oriented sites where knowledge is produced and maintained.

One potential solution is to try to change the ranking of knowledge, the general image of a politician, or challenge the different "truths" about how to behave and what to know within the political field. However, another answer could be to provide female politicians, as well as women with political ambitions, access to the knowledge and habits of political life. Here education is key. Many Cambodian women experience an increased comfort and self-confidence in the political arena after having received political training or attended higher levels of education. Creating female networks and opening up men's networks for female participation and bringing them into gender neutral environments, were two additional suggestions proposed by the interviewees.[78]

2.2. NETWORKING CREATING NEW SYSTEMS OF PUNISHMENTS AND REWARDS

As previously mentioned, some of the interviewed women put forth a new concept of a high-status female politician identity, while others tried to mold themselves into the shape of dominant male politicians. Another approach is how some women seem to want to portray an image of themselves as oppressed, in order to negotiate gendered power relations. Reviewing the interviews, this strategy was connected to the construction of new systems of punishments and rewards. In doing this, as a first step, women use their low-status female identity as a basis for forming coalitions, a political base, from which to fight for access to political power or against other forms of discrimination. For example, one Cambodian woman said:

> When women and men compete about who is going to be a candidate
> on the list it is a contest. Women are not as competitive as men.
> Therefore they lose. This has to do with women not being so violent.
> Therefore men win. *Women in politics must create networks*
> [emphasis added].[79]

Kathy Ferguson argues that coalition politics always involves a notion of identity through shifting away from *I* to "What can *we* do about X?"[80] This kind of identity politics has become very common in recent years. One conservative reaction to this politicisation has been to argue that strong sub-identities pose potential threats to national unity.[81] This critique implies

[77] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.

[78] Lilja, M. Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[79] Interview No. 18B.
[80] Ferguson, K. *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory.* Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993. p. 181.
[81] Phillips, A. *Närvarons politik: den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras.* [The politics of presence: political representations of sex, ethnicity and race]. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000. p. 36.

that an individual that stays loyal to one identity cannot abstract this identity away for the good of the "masses". It also implies that the subject is homogeneous and consists of only one identity, rather than being the bearer of multiple identities. Contrary to this view, this paper argues that identity needs not be a steady, naturalised, governing "I" but may temporarily rest in a "*we*" in order to adhere and shape a common cause.

Networking, in this sense, not only constitutes a base for political action but may also be a stimulus for women to break against the prevailing gender norms and become political. As stated above, different reward and punishment systems serve to socialise us and therefore we are more likely to invest in identities and images that are presented to us as most suitable. Women and men are socialised into differently ranked identities and thereafter become figures in the gender hierarchy. However, it is likely that more people would adopt other variations of identity if the passing of punishments and rewards would work differently or disappear. Power could thus be negotiated through changing an individual's relation to these grading systems. For example, we obey because we are afraid of the punishments handed out for disobedience. Therefore, to be able to disobey we must change our relations to the punishment or withstand the punishment.[82]

This makes networking interesting. Networking may be the base from which new social sub-groups, new associations, take root and new "shared meanings" are created. If a woman belongs to an alternative group, maybe the affinity within this group makes the punishments from the remaining society bearable. Within the new "we", knowledge and identities that are disparaged by society in general may be accorded a high status. In other words, as part of the process of networking, new norms may be created thus resulting in changed punishment and reward systems. Networking therefore provides a space for new identities that may be rejected by society at large, though still be rewarded in terms of appreciation and status within a more limited circle. In this sense Cambodian women's networking and organising may have positive effects. If Cambodian women gain appreciation for political actions among themselves – that is within a network of like-minded female politicians - they are able to overlook the external reactions and punishments distributed for not acting in line with the stereotyped norms established for women. Networking thus prevails as a highly relevant strategy of resistance in the sense that it may make it easier for those who want to resist the normalising processes involved in gendered hierarchies of power. For example, the respondent below begins describing the various punishments women receive if they do not act according to the given gender norms: they are put to shame and labeled "not a good girl":

[82] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.

Women speak so little. … But women are not shy. It means that they don't want to speak unless they have enough arguments. That they keep quiet doesn't mean that they are shy. […] But in the small group or small meeting they speak a lot, but in the public they are a little reserved. … [Due to tradition] one sit like this, talk like that even when women smile they do not open their mouths to show their teeth. They speak so little and even if they do not really speak out, people say: "You are not a good girl or something like that". And it's a story from a long, long history. If you sit like this or do like that it is okay but with many people you must pretend to be quite, smile like this otherwise people say "what kind of parents does she come from?", or something like that. … So, maybe this comes inside the blood or something of women? But sometimes in small groups women talk and they show that they are real human beings. But in public they have to pretend. They must think a lot before acting anything. They must think. To get a good image. Even the smile is not Ahhh….like the others. … Men start to accept [female politicians] now. Because, even if they do not talk or speak their work is better from time to time. You see even though they don't speak Man Som An or Im Run when you ask them to do something they are very responsible. And in small meetings they don't care. They can speak very nicely, very good. Give good advice to the other. And contribute with very good ideas. [83]

This quotation reveals a number of things. First of all, it introduces us to the different punishments that are distributed to women who do not correspond to the female norm. Secondly, it seems as if these women try to compensate for their lack of public performances through hard work in other areas where no punishments are distributed to active women: "even if they not talk or speak, their work is better from time to time." Thirdly, the citation implies that men are considered to be human beings while women are not. Because the sentence "But sometimes in small groups women talk and they show that they are real human beings" implies that women who are quiet are not human beings. But as the women stop living by the stereotypical female image of identity and start to talk and act (as men) they are suddenly included into the category of human beings. Finally, the respondent reveals how she, in contrary to others, appreciates when her female colleagues speak out and she pays them her respect: "They can speak very nicely, very good. Give good advice to the other. And contributes with very good ideas." Thus, in contrast with the general public, this interviewee acknowledges the political identity of her colleges and rewards them in terms of recognition. A network of female politicians therefore gives an opportunity for women themselves to distribute rewards, for instance in terms of appreciation. Alternative identities may thus become accepted within the more limited circle. This may open up a space for alternative political identities. A strong female network, where women compare themselves primarily with other women, makes it possible for women to stop socialising/normalising themselves to the image of a male politician. Moreover, if the network assumes a feminist tone, women might be able to distance themselves from hierarchical gendered discourses.[84]

To sum up, the strategy of creating a *'we'* can be seen as one possible political strategy for leveling out the hierarchical differences between men and women - through establishing new identities and realms of knowledge. However, one possible problem is that this strategy involves keeping a clear distinction between the sexes. Somewhat paradoxically, this strategy comes to resemble the same discursive practice that keeps women out of politics, as both have as a point of departure the dichotomous separation of the sexes.

[83] Interview No. 16A.

[84] Holmberg, C. *Det kallas kärlek: En socialpsykologisk studie om kvinnors underordning och mäns överordning bland unga jämställda par* [It is called love: a social psychologist study into women's subordination and men's superiority among couples of equality]. Göteborg: Anamma förlag, 1993. Milwertz C. and Wei B. "Organizing for Gender Equality in China – creating and disseminating alternative discourses." Paper prepared for the Women & Politics in Asia Conference. Sweden, Halmstad, 6-7 June 2003. p. 14-16.

3. IDENTITIES AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE

This chapter focuses on how issues of identity are crucial to who prevails in decision-making. As previously addressed, the traditional female identity can be used as a means for women to reach political power. For example, while some Cambodian women emphasised a "leader" identity, others offered an image of themselves as oppressed women in order to negotiate gendered power relations. One female party worker of FUNCINPEC seems to have built her power based on her ability to encourage women to come to meetings:

> When there is a meeting the leader always ask me to gather women
> and I can gather … in two or three day, about 400 women.[85]

With reference to common experiences, a shared identity, this respondent tries to legitimise her political presence. What is implied is that she, by way of her female identity, can understand and communicate with other women and thereby gather them to come to meetings. A strong argument for many women with political ambitions has been that women have a unique knowledge of and insight into other women's lives and only someone with similar experiences and interests can represent them.[86] This argument is placed side-by-side with the understanding that women compose at least fifty percent of the population and are therefore a group worth taking seriously in representative democracies.

Many women thus try to legitimise their political presence with reference to a common experience, a shared identity. However, women use their identities in additional ways in order to increase their share of the political power. This chapter will discuss how women try to enhance the female identity with positive worth in order to gain political power. It also includes an analysis of how different identities are organised and ordered.

3.1. REORDERING IDENTITIES AS A MEANS OF RESISTANCE

As was discussed in the first chapter, discourses regarding men and women are constantly drawn on to in order to create a gendered division in roles and responsibilities, such as defining politics as a male arena. Gender shapes how we think about politics and vice versa. Female politicians break this norm as long as what is considered "normal" is a male politician acting in male institutions. Therefore, women in the political arena must try to handle the fact that their female identities do not go together with the generally held image of a politician. For many women politicians it becomes a matter of organising their female and political identities into an understandable self.

Individuals espouse many different identities that can be articulated in different contexts, for example as a politician, woman, Buddhist, Cambodian, and so forth. The meanings of these identity positions are context dependent and differ in time and space. What becomes interesting in the context of gender and politics is how the different identities are prioritised, overlap or put together. As shown in Chapter One, a Cambodian female politician is, in most cases, forced to relate to, or conform to, dominant established norms in how to behave and act as a woman. The fact that she is born female seems to be impossible to overlook. Therefore, women holding professions associated with masculinity are often given double identities, for example "the female researcher", "the female doctor" or "the female politician". However, as I will show below, occasionally one identity is clearly prioritised over the others. Although Cambodian women in most cases prioritise their female identity, occasionally they are first and foremost

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[85] Interview No. 6A.

[86] Phillips, A. *Närvarons politik: den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras*. [The politics of presence: political representations of sex, ethnicity and race]. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000. p. 6.

expected to live up to other identities and this has implications for women's leadership. The interviews also show that it is possible for the women themselves to give weight to certain identities while downplaying others and this can be viewed as a strategy of resistance. For example, one woman stated that it is possible to hide one's female identity and just represent oneself as a leader:

> … as leaders women have also some difficulty. But somehow not all people know what women can do, they always think that men can do better, than women. But, through my work as a minister, I tried to explain these issues. To be a leader I didn't like to say, "I am a woman". But as leader I had to do the job as leader and not connect being a female with the job.[87]

From this quotation, one may draw the conclusion that a woman in a position of leadership can be seen, first and foremost, as a leader while "hiding" the fact that she is a woman. For this woman, it is preferable to talk from her leader identity thus leaving her female identity behind, since these are hard to combine. This is one way of using hierarchies to position oneself better; because by emphasising one's high-ranking identities, while hiding low status identities, one may be able to situate oneself as a trustworthy actor. As is indicated in the quotation above, it should also be possible for this woman to negotiate her low-status female identity by speaking from her high-status leader position. As a leader, she probably possesses the status needed to advocate for women's capacity in a trustworthy manner. Thus, the trick would be to try to redefine a low-status identity by relying on a high-status identity.[88] Another woman, representing a local NGO, elaborated on the possibility to move between identities:

> We "women from prosperity", we train women to have skills they can use in their work to be better politicians. But we ask them to never forget their identity as Cambodian women. What Cambodian women actually do![89]

This woman states that to become a better politician one must change, but despite these changes to not forget ones female identity position. These women normalise/socialise themselves, the latter with help of training from a local NGO, into adopting the masculine identity of a politician while still acknowledging their female identity. This can be interpreted as a strategy to move between identities in order to gain political power. It also fits very well with the call made in recent years for a theoretical framework that contains an acknowledgment of the existence of multiple identities.[90]

From a Cambodian perspective, alternating between the image of a male politician and that of a woman is an interesting form of resistance. How widespread this strategy will become has yet to be seen. As suggested above, female politicians in Cambodia who act as outspoken, public-oriented (male) politicians are viewed as troublesome. As Judith A. Howard and Jocelyn Hollander conclude, women who challenge expectations of low performance by contributing assertively to group discussions can experience a "backlash" reaction because their behaviour is perceived as illegitimate.[91] In other words, if women's identities or ways of acting do not correspond to the norm, they may be "punished".[92] Resistance against homogeneous discourses

[87] Interview No. 13A.
[88] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[89] Interview No. 2A.
[90] Ferguson, K. *The Man Question: Visions of Subjectivity in Feminist Theory*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1993. p. 160–164.
[91] Hollander, J. A. and Howard, J. A. *Gendered Situations, Gendered Selves: A Gender Lens on Social Psychology*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997.
[92] Thurén, B. "Om styrka, räckvidd och hierarki, samt andra genusteoretiska begrepp." ["About strength, reach and hierarchy and other gender theoretical concepts."]. in *Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift*. No. 3-4. Umeå: Kvinnovetenskaplig Tidskrift, 1996.

is not always a light-hearted process, but implies actions that may be penalised. For example, many women holding political positions remain unmarried because men do not want to marry such "unfeminine" women.[93] Nevertheless, as was shown in the previous chapter, networking may be a strategy to make such punishments bearable.

In the case above, the women themselves chose what identity to emphasise, however the contrary pattern also exists. For example, some women have been given political power in Cambodia due to their position as part of influential patron families. Thanks to the (re)emergence of old hierarchies and the strength of the patron–client relationship, certain women have managed to build up political power bases. In these cases, the identity as a patron has clearly been more important to the villagers than the fact that the patron is a woman; the family identity of the woman has been privileged and given priority over her female identity.

In conclusion, in analysing women's strategies to reach political decision-making, a number of questions ought to be considered. For example: What identities are given priority? How do female politicians signal different identities? And what impact does that have?

3.2. CONFIRING STATUS TO SUBALTERN IDENTITIES

There are additional ways in which positions of identity can be used to resist the uneven distribution of decision-making power. This section will discuss how one may re-value and upgrade subaltern identities by connecting them to high-status knowledge.

Power has previously been partly defined in terms of hierarchies. Thus to raise women's status in the hierarchy seems to be a reasonable strategy of resistance. This can be done by associating new and important domains with femininity. Reviewing the interviews it became obvious that some women tried to monopolise a newly introduced field, a resistance strategy that was made possible by technological globalisation.[94]

Technology and globalisation go hand-in-hand – globalisation promotes and disseminates technology, and technology helps to make globalisation possible. The access of technological latecomers to advanced technologies has thus drastically improved in recent years. Information is no longer as conditioned by geography or time since computers can be interlinked across companies, countries and continents.

The jobs created by this circulation of information via computers demand more education and training. Research shows that improved access to technology imports is increasing the demand for skilled labour in many low-income countries. It follows then that many computerised jobs/units are assigned status, especially in the Cambodian context where education and knowledge are highly ranked. In accordance with this, one Cambodian woman revealed the monopoly of technological knowledge as a factor in facilitating power. Obtaining access to technological knowledge was a conscious strategy in renegotiating the current location of power.[95] She said:

> I try to teach all women at my department computer skills. They are going to know more than the men. Then the men will have to ask the women to help them. This will increase their self-confidence. Then they will enjoy their work and they will be able to get a better job.[96]

[93] While some men are encouraging their wives to take part in politics in the interviews the reverse pattern is more frequently found. One respondent explained why (often non-political) men disapprove of their wives political careers: "In politics men do not want to have women in positions above themselves. Men do not like women in power, women who can make decisions that include them. The same thing occurs within the marriage. Men do not want their wives to be involved in politics or get a high rank above themselves" (Interview No. 7C.).
[94] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[95] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation*. Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[96] Interview No.

Through gender segregated teaching, women will be in possession of new knowledge, and the men will have to ask women for assistance. A divide between men-without-knowledge and women-with-knowledge will occur, which may contribute to a change in women's own identity, as well as the general social view of women. A female monopoly of computer knowledge may thus establish a new hierarchy. The interviewees also revealed that this new hierarchy transmitted itself to other areas as women gained a new self-confidence that enabled them to act differently and access new jobs.[97]

One woman said:

> You have to have self-confidence. If you don't believe in yourself you can't manage to do anything. But when you get education you get self-confidence. Then you can manage to show people your capacity. Then people have to question the old idea that the woman is mentally weaker than the man. She gets a new identity.[98]

This quotation demonstrates how self-confidence can facilitate the process of challenging stereotypes and hierarchies and create agency. Self-confidence flows from the ability to "fit in" - to be educated, knowledgeable about political life and able to act and debate publicly. This self-confidence and the attendant sense of agency that women acquire through the process of becoming an informed and capable public actor have been emphasised as core values within the empowerment debate. Feminist researchers, especially in development studies, have put forward a number of theories on empowerment, which is often described as a process in which the cornerstones are self-confidence, self-esteem and a feeling of an "I" that is connected to a sense of agency. Or as Joanna Rowland summarises: "Empowerment cannot simply be equated with self-confidence and dignity; it is also what happens as a result of having self-confidence and dignity. Hence the need for a "sense of agency" as an essential element of personal or collective empowerment".[99] In a similar way, Nadia Youssef emphasises self-confidence as a starting-point for improving women's societal positions. Through self-confidence, women's participation in decision-making increases and opens a pathway to empowerment, i.e. the possibility for women to increase their right to self-determination.[100]

3.3. DE-NATURALISATION AND THE POLITICAL IDENTITIES OF TIME AND SPACE

Not only might it be possible to increase women's participation in political decision-making through education, but issues of space and the cultural context matter. *While experiencing a new context – a new time and space – some Cambodian women have gained the opportunity to de-naturalise given "truths" about women and politics.* For some women their situation as migrant Khmers has opened up the possibility of redefining themselves in political terms. While female identity in Cambodia does not embrace any political dimensions, many women found the space to redefine themselves abroad. For example, one woman whose father was of high political rank grew up listening to and learning from his way of negotiating the world. For her, he and his life became the norm, and he presented an alternative image of what one could be and do. His life thus became the model for an alternative identity and way of life that was in stark contrast to the stereotypical female destiny:

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[97] Lilja, M. *Power, Resistance and Women Politicians in Cambodia: Discourses of Emancipation.* Köpenhamn: NIAS Press, forthcoming 2006.
[98] Interview No. 17B.
[99] Erwer, M. "Empowerment – en fråga om genus, makt och social transformation" [Empowerment: a matter of gender and social transformation]. in Eriksson L. and Hettne B. (ed) *Makt och internationella relationer.* Lund: Studentlitteratur. p. 246.
[100] Youssef, H. N. "Women's Access to Productive Resources: The Need for Legal Instruments to Protect Women's Development Rights." in Peters, J. and Wolper, A. (ed) *Women´s Rights, Human Rights.* New York: Routledge, 1995. p. 279-288.

> ...because I've been involved with my father... I wanted to be like my father, when I was young... But, because I was born a woman, a girl, so I had, you know, by custom, to get married early... So, I had to get married at 17 years old and I had to give up my life, you know.[101]

Women were at this time held to strict norms that defined their space for action and development, and that separated the possibilities from the impossibilities. There was a very strict line between the public man and the private woman. In the end the respondent assumed the identity position that she was expected to occupy.

> [My father] wanted you know, like other parents at his time... I should marry and just be at home...haha... he probably didn't think that I would get involved mentally. But I did, I did get involved very much.[102]

When married, the respondent was put in another situation that was distanced from political life, yet she still felt that the option of political participation was tempting. By knitting different memories together she reveals how multiple mechanisms of desire and power steered her identification processes. Her quotations illustrate how identity can be an ambivalent process; at the same time assuming an image of identity, you may not wholly internalise it, or you may be longing to be two different people.

> For a long time, I felt like I had to repress, you know, what I wished for. [...] When I was in USA it just came out. Because it was like a free country: you can do everything you want to do. [...] And finally it came out to be [she was becoming a politician].[103]

This life story gives us a hint of the strong and significant connections between politics and identity. It depicts how the identities that we are assigned steer who makes both public and private decisions, not only in Cambodia but all over the world. In viewing identity in relation to politics, different patterns become clear. First of all, as concluded above, it is interesting to note how time and space in relation to identity steer the political participation of different groups. While a "feminine" political identity has not previously been an option in Cambodia, today the United States to a certain degree provides the space for such an identity.

This space can be a means of transformation through deconstruction. As stated above, socio-cultural "truths" are invested with power when they are viewed as given by nature and thus as unchangeable and unchallengeable. Resistance, from this perspective, can be seen as a process that shows us that different "truths" about politics and politicians exist. When "naturalised" hierarchies and stereotypes are revealed as being merely contingent and constructed this opens up the possibility of acting in other ways. This pattern was revealed in my interviews. For example, one woman discussed how she became aware of possible alternative ways of acting locally while she was abroad and obtained an insight into the practices of foreign female politicians:

> I think that if all the women, not that they went for a long period of time abroad, but having seen that women outside have their ways, how other women behave, you know, how they struggle. They can apply that here too.[104]

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[101] Interview No. 8A.
[102] Interview No. 8A.
[103] Interview No. 8A.
[104] Interview No. 2A

Resisting naturalised hierarchies and stereotypes includes de-naturalising them, or making visible the mutability of stereotypes and hierarchies. For instance, by holding women who take on non-traditional positions as role models, both men and women may recognise that their gender roles are not static, but that there are alternative ways of behaving. The previous quotation implies that simply seeing alternative ways of acting may unmask practices and identities as either imposed constructions or merely accidental occurrences that can be shifted. Or in other words, when Cambodian female politicians have the opportunity to observe that women's relationships to the political arena are different in other contexts, they may recognise that their political identities or practices are not given by nature, and could be constructed differently.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY RELEVANCE

On a general level, this paper has addressed gendered power relations, resistance and claims to political power. It depicts how the image of the perfect politician in Cambodia is informed by gendered discourses that place women at the bottom of a hierarchy and stereotype men as political and women as apolitical. This gendered division of the Cambodian population goes against the most fundamental principles of democracy, namely that it is the people who ought to make the decisions, and that decision-making ought to be equally distributed among the people.[105] Both hierarchies and stereotypes thus alter the principles of equality that are the basis of democracy. Therefore, in order to understand who has the political power in democratic systems and why, gender hierarchies and stereotypes are key elements of analysis.

Nonetheless, the fact that men in Cambodia are often seen as the natural politicians and masculine characteristics have come to define the political sphere is constantly being questioned at different levels, especially among female politicians. Resistance to this injustice does not take the form of institutional change alone; women are also trying to change the stereotypes and hierarchies that undermine the democratic system through many different practices, such as through the formation of networks and use of identity politics. An important point here is that power and resistance are not the dichotomous concepts that they are often implied to be. Instead, agents of resistance are often simultaneously the bearers of hierarchies and stereotypes as well as agents of change.

4.1 NETWORKS

Among the various strategies that prevailed in the interviews, this paper discusses networking as one of two important means of resistance against the uneven distribution of political power. Networks and networking were used in a number of ways that seemed to remove different obstacles to women's access to political decision-making. First of all, the advantages of female networks in relation to women's lack of access to men's networks were discussed in the second chapter of the paper. Among the strategies discussed, education seems to be used to compensate for this lack of access. One policy priority would be lobbying to make men's networks accessible also to women. The meeting places of important networks must be gender neutral, and meetings ought to be held at an acceptable point in time from a women's point of view (for example, not too late at night). Another suggestion would be to fund political training workshops for women.

Secondly, women have used existing networks to gain positions of power. For example, one method of resistance utilized by the respondents was to capitalise on existing patron-client relations in order to increase their political power. In addition, wives of male politicians tend to use their husband's political networks to forge their own political careers. Again, it is a matter

[105] Phillips, A. *Närvarons politik: den politiska representationen av kön, etnicitet och ras.* [The politics of presence: political representations of sex, ethnicity and race]. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2000.

of identity because women are expected to become politically active in order to fulfill their duties as wives and compare favourably with the identity of the wife of a politician.

Thirdly, networking was discussed as a phenomenon that seems to have a number of positive effects in terms of creating space for new female political identities. Networking may change the punishment-reward system that makes many women hesitate to become politically active. Networking provides a space for new identities that may be rejected by society at large, rewarding these identities and behaviours in terms of appreciation and status within a more limited circle. This paper concludes that networking may provide women with an opportunity to re-value the female political identity and open up new spaces for women's political participation. Therefore, political, economical, technical and material support for the establishment of such networks is essential.

In all the above-mentioned ways, networking may contribute to increasing women's share in public decision-making. Facilitating and supporting women's networks therefore becomes part of building a just and sustainable democratic system.

4.2 IDENTITIES

The last chapter of this paper discussed women's use of identities as a means to reach political power. Women used their gendered identities to gain legitimacy and voice within the political arena and to make space for more women. The aim was to alter the stereotypical images of men and women, reversing the gender hierarchy and finally, to create a space for alternative political identities. All these strategies contribute to an environment that will more readily accept women politicians.

Making space for women to become politicians through identity politics followed certain patterns. For example, certain women argued that female politicians were better than male ones. It is common that women's political, work or ethnic identities are developed in relation to, and interact with, their traditional feminine identity. This occasionally creates difficulties for women to organise these often conflicting identities. In a political context, many women resolve the discrepancy between the feminine and the political identities by stating themselves that women are not suitable as leaders. However, others emphasised that female leaders make better politicians than men, thus challenging the common leadership identity while imbuing it with "female" characteristics. Or in other words, women's responsibilities and knowledge in relation to the domestic sphere were frequently put forward as qualifications for leadership. This strategy aimed at raising women's status, reversing the gender hierarchy and presenting a new (female) political identity - thereby promoting acceptance of women politicians. However, ambivalence arose when the very same women who regarded female politicians as superior to male politicians simultaneously tended to refer to men as the political norm.

A second strategy seems to be related to the organisation of identities, which influenced whether or not women were involved or gained legitimacy within the political field. Women may have other identities in addition to their feminine identity, which may be more suitable to the political arena than the traditional female identity. This was the case with some women who upheld the identity of a patron, which constituted a dominant identity and shaded the fact that the women also held a feminine identity. Due to patron-client relations and the ordering of identities thereafter, some women gained leadership positions. Moreover, certain women discussed how women themselves might organise their identities to their advantage. For example, a woman in a position of leadership may be seen first and foremost as a leader hiding the fact that she is a woman. As my interviews indicate, some Cambodian women try particularly to promote women's issues and to raise women's status on the basis of their identities as high-status leaders rather than as women.

In conclusion, women make use of the fact that everybody may carry multiple identities and move between these identities. This was also a strategy that was advocated by a local NGO as

a means to increase the number of women in politics. Thus, another policy recommendation would be to present women with other possible identities than the stereotypical and traditional feminine one, showing them the possibility of increasing their space of identification. This could be done simply by going out to villages and presenting women as knowledgeable actors with political possibilities.

Another strategy was that of enhancing and adding power to women's identities. In the context of Cambodia, any computerised jobs or units are carriers of status. In accordance with this, one Cambodian woman revealed that creating a female monopoly of computer knowledge was a conscious strategy in renegotiating the current location of power. Within her office, only women learned the new technological knowledge and men had to ask women for assistance. The women interviewed argued that a new hierarchy was created in this way that might transmit itself to other areas because women were acquiring a new form of self-confidence. A policy recommendation based upon this example would be to link women to new institutions, new areas and new knowledge in order to raise their status and challenge the traditional view of women through presenting them as knowledgeable and capable. In addition, women's self-confidence and thus their empowerment could be strengthened through publicly acknowledging that they are important actors with unique abilities and knowledge. In this way, local female and male leaders might also be encouraged to make positive statements regarding women's abilities. High-status actors have greater possibilities than others to affect the discourses on gender hierarchies. Therefore, increasing the visibility of high-status female politicians may help to alter the stereotype of women being mentally weaker than men.

Finally, through making visible the discourses that rank and label men and women as changeable constructions, one may open up space for resistance and change. Seeing alternative ways of acting and doing may reveal that the prevailing gender roles and discourses in politics are not static but can be challenged and changed. As it becomes obvious that alternatives exist, women could be encouraged to act differently. The final policy recommendation based on this understanding is that it is important for development agencies and governments to organise study tours or exchanges for both men and women to show how women in other countries/ contexts act as capable political leaders.

This paper includes an analysis of different strategies of resistance. A single strategy can be interpreted as an example of several different practices of resistance, thus falling under several different chapters. For example, women's attempts to network in order to change the punishment-reward system and thereby open up a societal space for alternative political identities falls both under the networking *and* the identity chapter. Thus the different chapters above not only overlap but also complement each other. In the end, the conclusion must be that resistance is always mutable and varied, involving both conscious and unconscious strategies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPP	Cambodian People Party
FUNCINPEC	Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique et Cooperatif.
SOC	State of Cambodia
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Administration in Cambodia