

ABSTRACT

Lilja, Mona, 2007: *'Speakings' of Resistance: Women Politicians Negotiating Discursive Power in Cambodia*. Ph.D. thesis, School of Global Studies, Peace and Development Research, Göteborg University, Box 700, 405 30 Göteborg, Sweden. ISBN: 978-91-87380-68-6 (English text)

This thesis focuses on power and resistance in two main sites of exploration. Firstly, it discusses the ways women politicians comprehend and relate to what they experience as the 'dominant' discourses on women and politics, including gendered power relations, in Cambodia. Power is here defined and pictured as the stereotypes and hierarchies that restrain Cambodian women from political influence. Secondly, and more importantly, the thesis explores different ways in which discursive resistance is performed. The aim has been to map the complexity and make visible the manifold practices existing, in this regard I do not only reveal, but also *theorize* resistance.

Fieldwork was conducted in Cambodia in 1997, 1999, 2002 and 2007. In the interviews conducted, the practices of resistance were formulated from two prerequisites: the construction of power and the construction of the discourse. The women used their identities, images of identity, and different discourses and representations in their attempts to change the construction of power. As the hierarchies and stereotypes often prevailed as natural, deconstruction seemed to be another important aspect of resistance.

Many aspects of resistance, presented previously by researchers within the field of discursive resistance (e.g. repetitions, multiple identities, irony, etc.), turned out to exist side-by-side, in new versions, with new strategies, with different 'extras' as well as they often overlapped or contradicted one another. But also 'new' strategies of resistance prevailed in the interviews. Concepts and phenomena like, concretism, universalism, frequent repetitions, silence and changed punishment and reward systems were used to make visible the complexity of resistance and develop previous research on the topic.

The overall conclusion is that there is a general leakiness, overlie or ambivalence between different performances of resistance. In the end, the assumption is that *resistance is always multiple, 'messy', sliding, overlapping or contradictory*. In addition, by evaluating different practices of resistance, it appears that resistance often undermines power as well as strengthen it, simultaneously.

Keywords: resistance, power, discourses, identity, deconstruction, repetition, hybridity, gender, gender hierarchies, stereotypes, Cambodia, politics, democracy