ABSTRACT

DON'T THEY WANT TO - OR DON'T THEY GET TO?
A STUDY OF THE LOW NUMBER OF FEMALE REPRESENTATIVES IN THE SAMI PARLIAMENT IN NORWAY

Torunn Pettersen, Sámi Instituhtta/Nordic Sami Institute

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From the first election in 1989 to the fourth election in 2001, the percentage of female representatives in the Sámi Parliament in Norway dropped from 33% to 18%. The study aimed to find some possible explanations to this decline. Our analysis indicates that in general, it has not become less attractive or more difficult for women to get to run as candidates during this 12-year period. The drop rather seems to be caused "indirectly" by a combination of aspects of the electoral system and changes in electoral participation and behavior: Both the number of electoral lists and the number of participants have increased, and more representatives are elected from the first position of the list. This is of consequence because there always have been fewer women on top of the lists than on the lists in general.

The survey also focused on the great variation in number of female representatives from the 13 different electoral districts. In one district, eight of total 12 representatives have been women, while from another district only men have been elected. By using different methods, we looked for tendencies in some selected districts that may explain this great variety in female representation. Few general discoveries were found, but in districts with a higher representation of women, there seems to be a local opinion about the importance of female representation and also active networks of Sámi and female politicians.

In addition to focus on the background for the study and on some of the findings, the presentation will also deal with some specific methodological challenges in studying the Sami society/societies in general, and Sami women’s conditions in special. Some of these challenges are related to the fact that the Sami society have no distinct borders, neither on maps nor in minds.