

SUMMARY

PHD THESIS: *Between Expertisation and Advocacy? The European Women's Lobby, Gender Expertise and EU Governance*

This thesis is motivated by the following observation: On the one hand, civil society advocacy organisations at the European level are often described as intermediaries between the EU institutions and European citizens in order to alleviate the democratic deficit and improve the legitimacy of policy outputs, and on the other hand a proliferation of expertise-based policymaking is said to have taken place. This proliferation is referred to as 'expertisation', describing contemporary's governance's extensive and increased reliance on science and professional expertise. In the area of gender policy, a rise of gender experts and gender expertise has also been observed. Yet, most existing literature conceptualises civil society actors as expertise-seekers rather than expertise-providers.

Using the European Women's Lobby, the largest and most prominent umbrella organisation representing women's interests at the European level, this thesis challenges this narrow view and proposes a widened conception of 'expertise' and expertise-providers in order to allow for the analysis of the 'epistemic dimension' of interest intermediation. In doing so, the author is able to trace the production, exchange, and application of the gender expertise in EU governance. This thesis focuses on the engagement of gender advocates in EU governance to illuminate how gender policymaking generates a requirement for expertise and specialized knowledge, and how the EWL has adapted to this requirement: the EWL self-identifies as an expert organisation and its gender expertise is one of its central organisational resources.

This thesis consists of four articles, each building on each other. Article one provides a typology of what specifically constitutes the EWL's gender expertise, opening up the 'black box' of this rather vague concept. Article two then goes on to map how the EWL creates and intermediates gender expertise intra-organizationally, by focusing on the mechanisms of learning and policy transfer. The third article shows how successfully social media is used for digital advocacy and sharing the EWL's gender expertise with the wider public sphere. The fourth article analyses how the EWL handles the potential 'tension' between technical expertise-provision and women's advocacy, in the case of the EU Maternity Leave Directive, demonstrating that the EWL mainly combined moral/normative and technical knowledge claims during the legislative lobbying campaign.

This thesis demonstrates that the EWL is an example of a civil society organisation in which an interplay between advocacy and expertise-provision can be observed. The thesis thus contributes to the existing literature in several research fields with the conceptual contribution of empirically analysing what constitutes the EWL's gender expertise, the theoretical contribution of the 'knowledge in civil society' approach, and the empirical contribution of applying computer-assisted text analysis in order to identify and analyse expertise-based claims of the EWL.