Pinning the Butterfly.

**Women, Blue Collar and Ethnic Minority MPs vis-à-vis Parliamentary Norms and the
Parliamentary Role of the Group Representative.**

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1. Introduction

1.1 Parliaments and diversity

Politicians and policy makers across the globe increasingly devote attention to the socio-demographic representativeness of political institutions. The under-representation of specific groups is increasingly seen as a democratic problem of justice, legitimacy, responsiveness and effectiveness (Phillips 1995). Institutions and political parties facilitate – at least in their discourses - the influx of descriptive representatives from under-represented groups. Parity laws and quotas have been applied in progressively more countries to break through barriers hindering women's formal and descriptive participation (Krook 2009). The under-representation of other groups, especially ethnic minorities, is also problematised (Bird 2004). To counter the lack of representativeness of political institutions and policy making on a substantive level, gender and equality mainstreaming policies are implemented and networks and committees for group representation such as women's policy agencies, parliamentary committees for gender and diversity, etc. are installed (Outshoorn & Kantola, 2007). Besides the implementation of such policies and policy bodies, the presence of members of marginalised groups in politics, and more precisely in parliaments, is also considered a means to reach better substantive representation of groups like women and minorities.

Nevertheless, the rich neo-institutionalist literature urges us to not overstress the capacity of individual actors to produce change since institutions like parliaments have a strong tendency towards stability and conservation. Feminist historical institutionalism stresses that the possibility for gender change, such as an increase in the descriptive and substantive representation of women, is defined and confined by path dependency of the institutional arena (Waylen 2009). Sociological institutionalism contends that the behaviour of actors is constrained by institutions and is a result of the interaction between formal and informal rules, practices and 'the way of doing things', reflecting norms, cognitive frames and the wider cultural context (Mackay et al. 2009; Mackay & Meier 2003). Newcomer MPs acquire existing "values, skills, loyalties and cognitive maps" through processes of political socialisation (Almond & Verba 1963: 29-30), both prior to and after entering parliament. MP's personal ambitions and goals are filtered and transformed by formal and informal institutional expectations and demands, resulting in attitudes and expectations fitting the performance of specific legislative roles (Clarke & Price 1977).

Hence, according to neo-institutionalists, in order to realise change, e.g. descriptive and substantive representation of groups like women and ethnic minorities, including MPs with such identities will not suffice. Institutions need to change as well. Institutional change is however not easily obtained and this is especially the case when existing power relations are at stake. Institutions entrench the power relations present at the time of their creation and institutionalise the privileged positions of those in power (Thelen & Steinmo 1992). As a consequence, institutions also privilege the expression of certain interests over others. Feminist research on gender and politics provides abundant proof of the neo-institutionalist claim that institutions tend to preserve power relations and privilege the interests of those already in power, notably men, and more precisely, heterosexual, highly educated, white, middle-aged men (Franceschet 2009).

As explained in the introduction to this special issue (Rai 2010), institutional norms, shaping formal and informal rules, reflect and secure these power relations. Ceremonies, formal and informal everyday rituals, in turn put these norms and rules into practice. By their repetitive performance, 'routinised' rituals re-produce and re-invent power relations on a daily basis. At the same time, they make those norms and rules invisible and 'commonsensical'. The norms and rules 'performed' through these ceremonies and rituals preserve and reinforce the distinction between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and at the same time sustain a sense of belonging amongst the 'insiders'. Apart from everyday rituals organising social relations in parliament in general, parliamentary roles are, in our view, also rituals performing the norms and rules concerning representational behaviour. They provide MPs with an institutional 'script' for the 'right' representational behaviour, again monitoring the possibilities of destabilising power.

This article deals with the apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, parliaments as envisaged by neo-institutionalists as stable and stabilising institutions socialising MPs into existing norms and conventions of all sorts, moulding parliamentary behaviour through applying existing role patterns and preserving existing power relations, and, on the other hand, the societal desire for and political practices aiming at institutional change, i.e. to diversify political personnel and open up political decision making processes to include group interests that were under-represented in the past. How do the existing norms deal with MPs having a 'different identity', and vice versa? Do we see a process of norms adapting to the 'desired' situation of diversity in parliament? Does that result in inclusion of the MPs as well as of the substantive interests of the group they belong to? To answer the question whether

and to what extent norms have changed to embrace diversity in parliament, we investigate everyday rituals, including role behaviour.

1.2. The group representative as a parliamentary role

Given the request to be more representative, it might be the case that parliaments actually have adapted to the presence of MPs with different identities. We hypothesise that in response to the demand for more diversity in parliament, a ‘script’ for parliamentary behaviour has been installed, notably the parliamentary role of the ‘group representative’ (Celis & Wauters 2008). In line with our conceptual framework, we suppose that such a ritualistic script for representational behaviour by MPs with different identities reflects the extent to which parliaments include MPs with different identities and whether/how they affect existing power relations.

Parliamentary roles result from the interplay between institutional frameworks, including both formal and informal rules, and individual goals (Searing 1994; Strøm 1997). They can be understood as consistent strategies induced by the members’ pursuit of different objectives and constrained by the institutional environment. The goals legislators pursue involve both career goals and emotional incentives. Parliamentarians are seen as reasonable people adapting their emotional incentives to institutional structures and their demands. They adopt strategies, i.e. prescriptions as to how parliamentarians may most successfully invest their time, media access and voting power, to maximise the likelihood of a preferred outcome (reselection, re-election, party office and legislative office). The realisation of each of these goals requires a different strategy, and hence the adoption of different roles.

What attracts us in parliamentary role theory is the interplay between personal preferences and the institutional framework resulting in specific representational behaviour. We however disagree with Searing that social identity is no longer determining the role of MPs in contemporary legislatures. This is firmly contradicted by the literature on women MPs that describes a specific type of legislator performing a specific parliamentary role: the MP being a member of a group that has been historically discriminated against, who has personal preferences with regard to representing the interests of that group and who experiences institutional constraints that shape attitudes and actual parliamentary behaviour in pursuing that goal. Hence, we could consider the group representative as a parliamentary role given the

combination of the goal of an MP to substantively represent their ‘own group’ and the specific way in which parliament institutionally structures the behaviour of that MP accordingly.

The ‘politics of presence’ theory contends that particularly representatives belonging to certain disadvantaged groups in society (e.g. women and ethnic minorities) have a specific potential to represent the groups they belong to due to shared life experiences and structural positions in society (Phillips 1995). These cause a specific background of experiences and knowledge that can be tapped into by descriptive representatives; it not only provides ‘resources’ in terms of consciousness, networks and expertise for the substantive representation of women, but also impacts upon their assessment of the priority of and engagement in representing women.

Empirical research reports that institutional features - e.g. numerical under-representation and the lack of power positions - often have a negative impact on the desire of women MPs to represent women [\(Franceschet, this volume\)](#). In light of the demand for more representativeness and diversity in political institutions and decision-making, one might ask whether the institutional constraints that hindered group representation in the past actually have become institutional facilitators. The number and/or visibility of group members has increased, the public increasingly expects them to substantively represent group interests, and as a consequence parties might discern an electoral advantage in furthering group representation. Hence, one might expect that institutions facilitate the role of the group representative, and even push descriptive representatives to represent their groups, regardless of their personal goals to do so.

2. Research design and methods

This article investigates daily rituals including the parliamentary role behaviour of (formerly) excluded societal groups – i.e. women, ethnic minorities¹ and blue-collar workers - to uncover institutional change in norms and rules necessary to meet demands concerning more diversity in parliaments. Firstly, it focuses on routinised rituals that organise social relations in parliament. Echoing neo-institutionalists, ~~we~~[the](#) hypothesis [put forward is](#) that this analysis will show that parliamentary norms are not adapted to nor reflect the [representatives’](#)~~er~~ identities. Next, our analysis focuses on representational performance by exploring the concept of the ‘group representative’ as a parliamentary role that establishes a link between

being a descriptive representative (i.e. being a member of a disadvantaged societal group) and substantive representation (i.e. parliamentary activity in favour of the disadvantaged group). At this level of analysis ~~the~~^{we} hypothesise ~~is~~ that to a certain extent institutional change has taken place, reflecting adaptation to the presence of MPs belonging to disadvantaged societal groups.

The analysis is conducted on the Belgian House of Representatives, the most important assembly of the bicameral legislature on the federal Belgian level. In our research we focus on MPs from groups whose under-representation has recently been problematised in Belgium: women (e.g. Celis & Meier 2006), blue collar workers (e.g. Wauters 2009), and ethnic minorities (e.g. Jacobs et al. 2009). For the first group, legislative quotas are in force stipulating the proportion of women and men on electoral lists (50/50 since 2002, plus male-female alternation at the top of the list). The issue of representation of ethnic minorities has raised a severe political debate preceding and following the enfranchisement of non-EU citizens in 2004. The political representation of blue collar workers on candidate lists was also an issue during the last federal elections in 2007. We suppose that these public and political debates favour group representation, and that in consequence the Belgian House presents a good case study for the prevalence of the ‘group representative’ as a parliamentary role.

The data were gathered via a focus group interview (conducted Spring 2008) and 11 individual in-depth interviews (conducted Winter 2009) elaborating insights from the focus group interview. Given the limited number of ethnic minority people and blue collar workers in the House (respectively five and three), they were all contacted to participate. ~~We selected~~ ^{A #} number of female MPs ~~were selected~~, ensuring that both new and long-serving MPs and MPs from all political parties (minority and majority) were included in the analysis. Our focus group interview was composed of six members of the three selected groups. The joint interview setting had the advantage of placing the role of the group representative centre stage by giving the possibility for parliamentarians from different groups to compare their situation with one another and give feedback on each other’s experiences and insights. Despite the rich insights these qualitative methods deliver, ~~it needs to be~~ ^{we} ~~acknowledged~~ that our analysis is solely based on self-reported data and not on observed parliamentary behaviour.

The participants are treated anonymously in this article (for general information on them, see appendices).

3. Research results

3.1 Different identities on the floor

When asked to ~~tell us~~ speak about formal and informal rituals linked to starting ~~to~~ work in the House, introduction to their colleagues in the parliamentary party and to other MPs, and regarding everyday contact with colleagues, speech and dress codes, etc. the respondents gave us ~~provided~~ insights into existing parliamentary norms. Taking the often anecdotal evidence together, it became clear that ~~they~~ these norms ~~still~~ still reflect the life and work style of the kind of MP that was and ~~still~~ is numerically dominant: male, highly educated, white, and with a partner taking care of their children.

Working hours are not adapted to people, often women, who are also expected to take care of children (Resp. 1) and the official regulations of the House don't have provisions for pregnancy and parental leave (Resp. 3 and 4), which is rather striking given that women MPs have worked in the House since 1929. Although women MPs feel that being pregnant is accepted, the consequences of having a young child often aren't. Young mothers get the explicit message that the combination of parliamentary work with having a baby will be tough "and that puts you in the position of the oddball" (Resp. 3). Absence caused by a sick child is accepted, but it nonetheless "undermines your position"; the norm is that the partner takes care of the children (Resp. 4).

The 'standard MP' is not only male, he is also upper class, highly educated and especially familiarised with juridical jargon and speech. Two of the working class respondents testify that the complex and juridical jargon is a real obstacle for them. It excludes them from full and independent participation in parliamentary activities. It nevertheless doesn't stop them from using their own speech style:

"I went to the parliamentary committee on Business and Economic Law. Twice and then never again. I didn't understand one single word! There were only jurists using legal terms: that's all double Dutch to me. I speak the language of ordinary people. Some ministers find me therefore an oddity and ask me why I do this. But ordinary people do at least understand my question, which is not the case for most other questions in parliament" (Resp. 5).

Clothing and cars also mark the class norm in parliament. The working class MPs all started wearing suits. ~~Wearing a costume~~ This is not only expected by ~~colleague MPs~~ their peers, but also and foremost by the workers themselves (Resp. 5 and 8):

“If I were to be on the House’s platform in overalls, I would be seen as ~~folklore~~ an oddity -and no-one would take me seriously. Also my former co-workers expect that I am smartly dressed because, after all, I am an MP. Although you are seen by the workers as one of them, this does not imply that you should be dressed like them” (Resp. 8).

Another MP also had to buy a different car after he was not taken for an MP when he arrived in his van and was stopped by the Military Police guarding parliament.

The appropriate clothing style furthermore reflects the norm of the male and ~~autochthonous~~ ethnic minority -MP. Women MPs told us that they adapt their clothing style to a more official one. It is about “respect for your function, the presence in this important building, respect for your voters. Never jeans. It is also a strategy for being taken seriously by your colleagues” (Resp. 11). It was also the dominant view that women MPs should refrain from a frivolous or revealing dress style because female sexiness and seriousness are irreconcilable. This can be interpreted as women anticipating a sexualising gaze not acknowledging them to be full MPs. Dressing as an MP also implies not showing your ethnic-cultural or religious background, like wearing a veil. An Islamic MP explains that showing religious identity in that way would cause a fuss and arouse extreme reactions. Nevertheless, she explains, it would not stop her from wearing a veil, for instance in a period of mourning or to make a point, although it would certainly hinder her parliamentary activities. The ethnocentricity of the standard also becomes clear during work lunches and receptions where alcohol and meat are served abundantly. “~~One People~~ expects you to eat meat, and that you drink, and drink a lot. Everything else is seen as strange. If you don’t eat meat for Islamic reasons, it becomes rather difficult. Then you often end up eating the decoration, the vegetables on the side” (Resp. 4).

There appears to be a standard profile of an MP that is performed through rituals concerning presence, dressing, eating and speaking. Non-compliance results in exclusion, smaller or larger hindrances in daily functioning in parliament. But performing the rituals doesn’t

guarantee inclusion. Women, ethnic minority and working class MPs stay visible as ‘others’ – like colourful butterflies in a grey room. “My face. I look different than the others. It attracts attention, in a positive and a negative way” (Resp. 10). Ethnic minority representatives especially report this and being a woman of colour seems to amplify that kind of visibility: “Belonging to an ethnic minority and being a woman: no need to explain! That is clearly visible, at first sight” (Resp. 6).

This visibility is not power neutral; often women, ethnic minority and working class MPs report that it is not taken for granted that they are equally good representatives, and that they have to prove they are. Young women MPs in particular report that they are regarded with suspicion. The negative stereotype of being a “babe” (Resp. 9) is seen as an effect of the quota for women. But the working class and ethnic minority male MPs were also confronted with the stereotype of being there because of the wish of their party to be more representative and not because of their own expertise and capacities. Young women MPs tell anecdotes about how they were taken to be the secretary, a staff member, the group leader on missions abroad, in the wrong room because it was the military committee meeting or being asked where the committee’s chair was when they were actually the chair (Resp. 2; Resp. 9).

In reaction to these stereotypes, most of the respondents put extra effort into proving that they are up for the job. They consider that they have succeeded when their colleagues no longer see them as an MP with a different identity, but as a mainstream MP. A young, woman MP belonging to an ethnic minority, who is also leader of a parliamentary party, said:

“In the beginning they said ‘oh yes, the only woman...’ and ‘oh yes, the only person from an ethnic minority...’. Now it is more ‘oh, what is she going to say?’ That is cool. In the beginning they saw me only as the ‘alibi Ali’. I wanted to prove the opposite and I succeeded. That’s my way to fight back. It still drives me.”

It is clear that MPs with identity features that differ from the standard are confronted with prejudices related to their identities. These do affect the functioning of ‘different’ MPs as representatives, in that they have to invest in proving that they are ‘equally good’. But no respondent reported that they couldn’t manage to do so. It is nevertheless striking that success in that respect – notably, being included in the ‘insider group’ - is defined by the respondents as making their own identity features invisible, and not for instance, as giving them a positive

connotation. Adapting to the norms, thereby decreasing diversity, seems to be a far more dominant approach than adapting those norms to the existing diversity in parliament.

3.2. Identity and substantive representation: the role of the group representative

3.2.1 Individual preferences

Our respondents confirm the ‘politics of presence’ theory. Most descriptive representatives have the desire to behave as a representative of the interests of their social group and are convinced that they have specific capacities to do so:

“I am persuaded that having representatives from certain social groups in parliament can be beneficial. I used to get annoyed by politicians talking about an ethnic minority topic without having any contact with ethnic minorities. Having these contacts provides an extra intellectual ‘baggage’, it gives you a step ahead: you can speak about this group from a broader point of view” (Resp. F 1).

Opmerking [s1]: I am not sure what this denotes? First usage – could you explain please or remove for consistency?

Particularly in the first years in parliament they see it as their duty to spend considerable attention on the interests of their social group. As a parliamentarian with a past as a blue collar worker said: “When I first entered parliament, I had great ambitions: I wanted to defend the interests of my supporters, namely the dock workers” (Resp. F 3). This sense of duty seems to be stronger for social groups that are not numerous in parliament (blue collar workers and ethnic minorities in this analysis): “I do not defend intentionally women’s interests (...). But as an ethnic minority MP, I see it as my mission to defend their interests, because there are only four or five of us here” (Resp. 3). At the same time, the low number of MPs with a migratory or visible-minority background might also make it more difficult to represent ethnic minority interests: “Defending ethnic minority interests is more difficult. The public support is lower, there is left-right divide, the presence of extreme right parties and there are anyhow fewer people from ethnic minorities that make their voice heard” (Resp. 4).

Opmerking [s2]: Ditto as above. Could check for others as well eg. On p. 13

However, the parliamentarians also stress that their presence is not a necessary condition for the representation of interests. There are, for instance, occupational categories who do not

have descriptive representatives in parliament, but whose interests are nevertheless tackled in parliament. It is not a necessary condition, but it can provide an added value in terms of representation:

“I can’t imagine that when it is pointed out to the leader of our parliamentary party that there is a specific problem with ethnic minorities that he will not occupy himself with that problem, but probably I am more engaged with it, because I do understand it better, I come out of that community, I was brought up there and I am still in the midst of that community” (Resp. 6).

3.2.2 Institutions and expectations

Apart from their own desire to represent their groups in parliament, most respondents experienced implicit and explicit expectations from their political party, individuals, organisations, and/or the general public to act as the representative of their social group.

Firstly, most respondents acknowledged that they are put forward by their political party as a candidate because of identity features, and sometimes even a specific combination of identities: “There were still some positions open on the candidate list. They had designated a specific profile for one of them: young, woman and belonging to an ethnic minority (preferably united in one person). They wanted that profile because they would like to have a more diverse representation. (...) Finally, they ended up with me” (Resp. 3). The party assumed that these groups constitute a significant share of the electorate and by presenting candidates from that social group they hoped to turn these candidatures to their electoral advantage. Becoming a candidate is the result of the interplay between, on the one hand, the demand of a political party to have members of social groups on their candidate lists and, on the other hand, a supply of these members who have ambitions to defend the interests of their group. This interplay was mentioned by several MPs.

Once in parliament, our respondents encountered expectations from the party to act in the interest of their group (as long as this matches with the party policy). Some respondents mention pressure from the parliamentary party to become a member of specific parliamentary committees, to take up certain policy issues concerning their social group or to act as

spokesperson in a workshop that deals with, for instance, integration or dockworkers. One respondent even mentioned a control system amongst ethnic minority MPs in the Brussels parliament:

“There were many ethnic minority MPs in the Brussels parliament. Together we have set up some sort of self-control mechanism. If there was a topic related to ethnic minorities, the voting behaviour of other ethnic minority MPs was closely monitored. If there was one MP who had not taken a clear and straightforward stance in favour of ethnic minorities, this was communicated to journalists and he was publicly condemned by the other ethnic minority MPs” (Resp. 10).

Secondly, MPs also experience such expectations ‘from below’: “During my first years in parliament, I combined my parliamentary mandate with a professional occupation as a dockworker. This created a strong linkage with my social group. Every other day, my colleague dockworkers used to ask me: ‘what did you do for us in parliament yesterday?’” (Resp. F 3). Unsurprisingly, civil society groups defending the interests of a particular social group also aim to influence the parliamentary behaviour of ‘their’ descriptive representatives, who in turn are keen on maintaining good contacts with these organisations. However, the fact that they experience pressure to behave as representatives of these organisations does not mean that they necessarily adapt their behaviour.

Thirdly, MPs belonging to under-represented groups sense the implicit expectation of the general public for them to act in the interests of their social group:

“The general public opinion expects that I will take positions in the interest of ethnic minorities. This is a very remarkable phenomenon. It seems self-evident for a lot of people that because I have an unfamiliar name, and because I have a link with that group, that I will represent them. I heard many of these statements shortly after my entrance in parliament” (Resp. F 1).

And last but not least, the media also often approach descriptive representatives as spokespersons for their social group:

“I receive more media attention when I raise topics related to ethnic minorities compared to more general topics. And if the topic of the day is about ethnic minorities, the media always manage to find me. If the media need me, it is always about that kind of topic (...). During my pregnancy leave, there was some controversy about naturalisations. I had messages from more than ten journalists in my mailbox, while there were two other parliamentarians from my party in that parliamentary committee, but they of course do not belong to an ethnic minority” (Resp. 3).

We expected ethnic minority MPs to have more and stronger preferences and incentives to defend their group than women and blue collar workers. Ethnic minorities are more visible and contested in modern society and their numbers in parliament are low, while women MPs are more numerous and a blue collar identity tends to dilute once in parliament. We obtain, however, mixed evidence: some ethnic minority MPs declare that they see it as their duty to represent their group, while other ethnic minority MPs indicate that it is more difficult to represent these interests.

3.2.3. *More than a group representative*

Notwithstanding that the personal goals of many of our respondents consist of representing their groups, the belief that their identity is an added value in that respect and the fit between goals and institutional expectations, most respondents stress their aspiration to be(come) more than a group representative. They claim the right to (and actually do) refuse to perform the role of the group representative as their only parliamentary *‘raison d’être’* and do not want to be the spokesperson for women’s, blue collar workers’ or ethnic minorities’ interests *only*. Nevertheless, this does not mean that MPs from socially disadvantaged groups are not willing to take on the role of group representative *at all* (rather on the contrary: see above). Besides some attention for their social group, they want to be included in the group of ‘mainstream parliamentarians’, working on general topics. They are proud to be colourful butterflies, and sometimes they also act as butterflies, but they don’t want to be the outsider.

This can at least partially be explained by a rational strategy of the representatives. Although some of the respondents do inform organisations and members of their social group about

their representative activities with the goal of securing or acquiring votes, most respondents do not believe that being a member of a social group and having acted in the interest of that group in parliament constitute significant advantages in the selection process controlled by the party, nor in the elections. Due to the enlargement of the electoral districts, the concentration of a social group in the electoral district is considered to be too small to convince the party that as a group representative they deserve a place on top of the list. Criteria used by the ‘selectorate’ and by the voters refer in the first place to capabilities and to general functioning in and outside parliament, and only to a far lesser extent to the representation of group interests.

The most important reason for resisting the role of the group representative is however the fear of being reduced to a parliamentary role that is seen as marginal and low status. The group representative is not considered to be a fully-fledged parliamentarian by most women, blue collar and ethnic minority MPs themselves. A female MP with an ethnic minority background explains:

“I do not want to occupy myself solely with diversity, asylum and migration. On the contrary, I want to keep off them as much as possible. It is not that I am not interested in these topics, but if I would only deal with these topics, they keep sticking on me forever. I want to be more than that (...) Because I focus on other topics, people can no longer lock me up in a mental image based on my physical and cultural ethnic background and my gender (...) The only way to remove that is to become involved in general topics, otherwise you always will be placed in the same pigeon-hole” (Resp. 4).

4. Conclusion

This article [has](#) dealt with an issue of importance to many Western democracies: the tension between the societal and political desire to be more inclusive and diverse on the one hand, and, on the other hand, political institutions that, according to neo-institutionalist scholars, tend to preserve norms favouring the dominant group. To gain insight into these norms our research focused on everyday rituals organising social relations and on the performance of the representative role of the group representative. Our main conclusion is that existing norms in

the Belgian House are stronger and more resistant to change than increased attention for the political representation of women, blue collar workers and ethnic minorities would have suggested. In general, MPs from these groups are more likely to adapt themselves instead of parliamentary norms being changed to acknowledge and embrace diversity. For instance, fighting prejudices about their lesser capacities leads to compliance with the existing norms of how MPs should behave and perform, not to a positive recognition of difference. Hence, inclusion as full MPs results in erasing difference and preserving the existing norms and power status quo.

At the level of substantive representation, on the contrary, we might have provided proof of institutional change, at least to some degree. By installing the role of the group representative, the Belgian House allows for and even supports members of societal groups to realise their ambition to represent their interests, a role for which they believe to possess specific qualities. Nevertheless, this role is not considered to be powerful or to increase chances for selection and election. Performing it does not result in full inclusion as an insider. This results in MPs' personal strategies that aim at (simultaneous) recognition as a mainstream, generalist MP. Applied to the parliamentary role theory: MPs with a specific identity have personal preferences to represent their particular group and are encouraged to behave as a group representative by institutions such as parties, organisations and the general public. However, since MPs estimate that this behaviour is not compatible with their career goals, i.e. being a mainstream MP securing re-election, they often hesitate and even refrain from taking up the role of group representative.

Hence, our conclusion regarding the substantive representation of societal groups echoes the one concerning norms and habits in parliament: the role of the group representative cannot be seen as a sign of parliament truly and positively embracing diversity. Moreover, it might even be interpreted as an institutional strategy to address the request regarding diversity and inclusiveness but at the same time preserving existing power relations by limiting their impact on parliamentary work and the political agenda. From the part of the MPs this results in balancing between being that colourful butterfly, but making sure not to be pinned down as one.

Opmerking [s3]: Could you please have another sentence here that ties this observation to your introductory remarks about the importance of rituals/rules/informality?

¹ An ethnic minority person has a minority ethnic-cultural family background; (s)he might have the Belgian nationality or not. In Belgium the two most dominant allochthonous groups are Moroccans and Turks (Jacobs et al. 2009).

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Appendix 1: Participants in the focus group

Reference number	Social group	Party in government/ opposition	Number of parliamentary terms (the current one included)
Respondent F1	E + W	Govt	1
Respondent F2	B	Opp	1
Respondent F3	B	Opp	4
Respondent F4	W	Opp	1
Respondent F5	W	Govt	3
Respondent F6	W	Govt	1

E = Ethnic minority; W = Women ; B = Blue collar worker

Appendix 2: Participants in the individual interview round

Reference number	Social group	Party in government/ opposition	Number of parliamentary terms (the current one included)
Respondent 1	W	Govt	4
Respondent 2	W	Govt	1
Respondent 3*	W + E	Govt	1
Respondent 4	W + E	Opp	1
Respondent 5*	B	Opp	1
Respondent 6	W + E + B	Opp	1
Respondent 7	W	Opp	1
Respondent 8*	B	Opp	4
Respondent 9	W	Govt	2
Respondent 10	E	Opp	1
Respondent 11	W	Govt	1

E = Ethnic minority; W = Women ; B = Blue collar worker

* = did also participate in focus group