

Representative democracy from inside

Characteristics of the Finnish veteran MPs' oral history interviews

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Library of Finnish Parliament



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Oral history at the Library of Finnish Parliament

- 380 interviews with former MPs since 1988
- 12-15 new interviews annually
- length of the interviews: in average 6 hours
- usage of the interviews: for scientific research with applications
- similar projects in Europe: Britain and Sweden
- In 1945–2011, a total of 1,402 MPs have been elected to the Finnish Parliament, of which 350 (25%) have been women. More than a quarter (370; 26.2%) of them have been interviewed from 1988 onwards.
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Why interviews with the former MPs?

- motives of the parliament institution: saving voices, dealing with, even controlling the past
- scientific motive: production of research material
- MPs' key role in representative democracy in between people and political elite
- relative few scholars have used as research material

Advantages of the interview collection

- comprehensive, systematically compiled and vigilantly maintained
- recordings transcribed and digitalized
- professional historians as supervisors and as interviewers
- questionnaire: comparison between the interview contents possible
- cross-checking with other sources easy

Limitations and problems

- language barrier: interviews in Finnish or in Swedish
- huge amount of OH material
- research questions - what will be the interests of the future historians?
- parliament institution's influence on interview production

Oral History in Finland today

- established as complementary method for historical studies
- oral history theory developed further by ethnologists and by social scientists
- Finnish Oral History Network FOHN since 2003
- Finland - a true "history nation" that has not yet recognized the potential of OH



Veteran Members of Parliament Oral History Archive
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