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ENCOUNTERING METIS: FEMINIST ARTICULATIONS OF UN SECURITY COUNCIL PRACTICE

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Encountering Metis: Feminist Articulations Of Un Security Council Practice

by Sam Cook

Abstract

This project is an exploration of feminist interventions in the policymaking practices of the United Nations Security Council and, specifically in relation to its thematic policy on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). I draw on poststructuralist feminist methods and theorizing in the disciplines of International Relations and Critical Security Studies as a way to draw in and situate my own prior experience working as a feminist policy advocate in this institution. I respond to scholarly critiques that interventions in WPS policy have failed to meet their radical potential and write against those that, in their telling of feminist interventions foreclose the possibilities for future efforts and for feminist community across institutional boundaries.

My analysis takes up the conceptual tools of Laclau and Mouffe’s discourse analysis; a framework in which the meaning of any particular object, subject or action are seen as dependent on how its identity and significance is constructed by/within a particular discourse at a moment in time and through the operation of power. I argue that feminist interventions in WPS policy can best be understood as attempts at meaning-making that are shaped by, and potentially shape, the day-to-day practices of the institutional space into which they emerge. The fluidity of the discursive space allows me to take up a range of alternative texts and perspectives and provide an alternative reading of the Security Council policy space by taking on the perspective
of those feminists assumed co-opted by its hegemonic forms. I use the work of
Michel De Certeau and explore feminist interventions as ways of using or working
with the dominant practices of the space in order to create or sustain alternative
meanings. This opens up space to think in more complex and subtle ways about the
possibilities for these interventions.

Beyond the specificities of its context, this dissertation engages in the project
of ‘theorizing practice’ by confronting, and attempting to move through, the
challenges of telling the practice of the everyday. It moves beyond scholarship that
focuses on subjects and objects in the abstract and tries to situate and reflect on these
in a way that captures something of their interactional dynamics. It does so with a
specific interest in exploring feminist articulations of these everyday policymaking
practices and how we might tell of those as going beyond mere (re)production of the
practices they seek to shift. I argue that feminist articulations of Security Council
practice often rely on the invocation of relationships between differently situated
feminists. It is in the articulation of these feminist relationships, I argue, that we
might look for the trace of a feminist space ‘elsewhere.’
Acknowledgements

So many people have held me up along the path to completing this dissertation. No expression of gratitude will every feel sufficient. To my committee, a collective thank-you for the space you gave my voice. Ronnie Lipschutz, your questions and our conversations always had me thinking anew and I am deeply grateful for the many ways you helped me through this. Dean Mathiowetz, your encouragement and enthusiastic attention to my (sometimes incoherent) ramblings helped me keep working in the stuck places. Anne-Marie Goetz, it has always been a privilege to work with you. Thank you for mentorship and encouragement over the last decade and your willingness to take this on as you did. To my grad school crew – Claire Lyness, Sarah Mak, Holly Harridan, Sandra Harvey, Omid Mohamadi, Steve Araujo, Megan Martenyi – your friendship is so precious and my life enriched by having you in it. Each of you helped me over the finish line. To my WPS and WILPF friends – my work with you is what set me on this path. Sarah Taylor, Maria Butler, Marianne Mollman, Anne-Marie Goetz (again) – your words, ideas, and feminist spirit are everywhere in this as embodiment of Metis. Ray Acheson, your work inspires and I have never stopped learning from you. I am grateful to all of you for the feminist community you provide. Gratitude too to my many teachers along the way, to Andrea Wells for your support and to Sangeeta Chowdhry for getting me to begin. To my sisters – thank you for your care and love for me always. And to Cassie Ambutter – you are my heart. Your love and support in this was everything.

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Dedicated to my Dad – Peter John Cook – a man whose gentle and generous spirit, intellectual curiosity, loyalty and sense of humour inspire me to give of myself in this world.
A Feminist Preface

A preface is a useful thing. An opportunity, at the end of it all, to explain how it all came about. It is, in one sense, an opportunity to explain any remaining peculiarities of form. I call it a Feminist Preface to make a claim that those peculiarities – the deviations from what might be a more appropriate form (for a dissertation) – are what makes this a feminist text. To begin I offer, as a feminist opening of space, a personal story to situate what follows, a story of what initiated this particular intellectual inquiry.

An Early Narrative

When I was about 13 my best friend and I sat at the bottom of my garden in suburban Johannesburg, a misshapen candle burning between us as we discussed with teenage-intensity the depressing state of the world in which we found ourselves. I cannot recall exactly what was going on at the time but, despite tight control of the media in the mid-1980s, I was certainly aware of their declaration of yet another “State of Emergency” and of the oppressive, racist and violent nature of the Apartheid regime. No doubt news of wars happening ‘elsewhere’ was a useful way to distract attention from what was going on at home. That many adults around me seemed to treat the problems of South Africa, and the world’s ‘political situation’ (as I remember it being called) as deep and intractable filled me with frustration and despair. Why, we asked ourselves as we sat there, could each country not nominate one person to represent them and then all the representatives could then meet and talk and sort things out? I
am not sure how we had diagnosed the problem such that this was the solution but it did seem to us to be a blindingly obvious course of action. The further details of our proposal are lost to me but I remember telling my Dad about it later that evening (once he’d located our garden hideout) and him saying something along the lines of: “Angel, that sounds like the UN. It already exists and it doesn’t really work like that.”

That evening may have been the last time I spent thinking seriously about the United Nations until nearly 20 years later when I accepted a job at the UN office of an international women’s peace organization – the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. I began with a theoretical understanding of issues faced by women in war, and considered myself a feminist with some practical activist experience. But I knew almost nothing about the UN itself. It was not an institution that was really covered in the apartheid school curriculum. My knowledge of peacekeeping was mostly garnered from films parodying the ‘blue helmets’ in Namibia and their legacy to the continent of exorbitantly expensive white Land Rovers. To be honest, I really had no idea of how the UN actually worked or what I was supposed to do when I went to work and did advocacy. Nor did I realize when I started what it would mean to take my ideas and theories of feminism to work in that institution.

I went on to spend almost five years doing policy advocacy and running a project that monitored and advocated for the implementation of Security Council policy on “women, peace and security,” including being engaged in advocacy that ‘resulted’ in the Security Council’s adoption in June 2008 of Resolution 1820 on
sexual violence in conflict. I learned a lot in that time about the UN and about feminist theory in so-called practice. For one thing, I discovered early on that my Dad was right. The UN and Security Council policy-making was nothing like the reasoned and orderly environment I had imagined in which state representatives came together to talk and resolve the world’s problems. Aside from the fact that ‘state representatives,’ while the core of the system, were just one of many categories of actors involved in policy creation, the level of complexity far exceeded anything I could have contemplated. There was no book I could read to figure out what to do and there were countless everyday practices and rules of the game that needed to be observed to be an effective advocate.

I learned, for example, that ‘advocating for and monitoring policy’ really involved an endless string of meetings at which unspoken protocol dictated who was seated at the table and who at the seats against the wall, that determined how people were addressed and what sorts of critiques it was proper to raise in which sort of meeting. I learned that the best policy pitches came in the form of really good questions; that nuanced arguments are politically risky; and that being outspoken and critical was often deeply appreciated by government or UN system insiders who felt constrained by their own positions. I learned that successful advocacy involved interactions with governments over coffee and cigarettes and in hallways between meetings and that these informal encounters created spaces where persuasion was practiced and influence exerted. I learned that gossip and rumours from informal moments often made it easier to respond effectively to political opportunity and that
good timing was often more important than the substance of arguments. I learned the astounding influence exerted by individuals behind the scenes and the discomfort of being an insider and part of an elite, conflicted between a feminist politics of inclusion and a desire to take advantage of transitory political opportunities that seemed to advance the agenda of activists in the so-called ‘field.’ I learned too that this discomfort at how feminist politics or theory bumped up against practice within the UN space was not unusual. I learned that a feminist politics made space for many incompatible approaches to the world – ending militarism was, for example, far from a priority for many of the advocates with whom I had to collaborate. I learned that a ‘feminist approach’ could entail ten organizations working in coalition taking three days to put together a one-page advocacy letter. I learned the process would likely involve at least some: behind the scenes teeth gnashing; rolled eyes at the political naïveté of newcomers; or frustration at those who said and did nothing until the end of the process and then complained that their pet issue wasn’t represented. In short then, I learned, as was I suppose, to be expected, that the experience of UN policymaking bore little resemblance to the world of my naïve imagination. What was somewhat less expected, however, was the disconnect I felt evident between that world of policymaking ‘practice’ I had inhabited and many feminist academic critiques thereof – critiques that provoked in me (and others, I’m told) profound discomfort and frustration, often as much for what they left out as for what they contained. A desire to think through (and potentially overcome?) this disjuncture was the impetus for this project.
**

I have resisted the urge to edit this story. It was originally written for a methods seminar somewhere in the first two years of this PhD process. I was attempting to capture, in a brief sketch, the impetus for my project. In the course of writing, however, I have come to treat it as an object of knowledge and have allowed it to return at different places within my dissertation. In one sense, it allows me to situate myself in what follows—a surfacing of self that admits of the impossibility of objectivity but seeks to use that instability as a place from which to produce something else; my feminist alibi.

Returning to this narrative anchor during the course of writing has also served as a way to revisit the disjuncture and reflect upon how to articulate the gap produced between encounters of an earlier self (a self contained in this story) with feminist critiques of the Council’s WPS policy. I have returned again and again, trying to identify what those narratives provoked in me, to articulate the texture of the discomfort I felt, to inscribe the distance between my sense of things and theirs. In their telling of the Council’s ‘WPS Agenda’ these narratives disrupted both my sense of feminist self in the present and what I believe/d possible in the future. But they also disrupted my sense of my own past, calling into question my sense of feminist identity in particular moments, my experience of doing WPS advocacy and, my sense of what it was to do so in relation to this particular institution -- the UN Security Council. In their critique of the WPS Agenda they articulated a space that I did not recognize, and yet knew in an embodied way. And so I began to pay attention to these
spaces: between the subjects and objects of place I saw produced and between my own sense of self and of places I’ve intimately inhabited. It is out of the shuttling between the worlds in texts and ones in embodied memory that most of what appears here, emerges -- between accounts of places and my experience of them, between the steps of processes and the invisible spaces in them, between accounts of subject/object relations and my sense of myself in those. The return to this early narrative serves as a reminder that this dissertation was never only about the knowledge production in which I participated once I commenced my PhD. It was about finding a way to use the new learning to think through and articulate that already known, a way to articulate a space I had occupied and yet remained impossible in the narratives I encountered. But it was also a way to attempt to write, as a feminist, from a place of practice that is in-between these.
Chapter 1: Narrative Beginnings

*Words Between Worlds*

the International Committee of [the] Red Cross (ICRC) declares Aleppo to be ‘on brink of humanitarian disaster.’ In what kind of a world do we live where continuous Syrian regime airstrikes to systematically wipe out healthcare, hospitals and its own citizens is considered a ‘humanitarian disaster?’ Is the Syrian regime a tornado? Is it a hurricane? Is it a tsunami? And how many more airstrikes before it no longer is on ‘a brink’ of a humanitarian disaster? Fuck the UN, ICRC and the whole international humanitarian community, fuck you all. Not airstrikes, regime airstrikes. Not humanitarian disaster, war crimes and massacres.¹

This dissertation is not about Syria or the war in that place in any direct sense; what I know of Syria is more limited than I’d like. Although the arguments made here are ones that I hope will resonate elsewhere, it is an account located in a particular institutional space – the UN Security Council. My concern when I began this project was to say something of the particularities of that place and how policymaking there happens -- at least in relation to its policy on the theme of ‘Women, Peace and Security.’ I had hoped, by so doing, to say something of the way feminist meanings, ideas, and desires may come to be excluded, adopted or shifted by the dominant practices in that space. Although something of these beginnings remains evident here, in many ways it has become as much about how our articulations of this institutional policy ‘space’ shapes our understanding of the possibilities it offers for future feminist efforts (both within and beyond those institutional boundaries). This project, and the stories that emerge through it became an exploration of how feminists use

¹ Lebanese activist, Public FaceBook Status Update, Screenshot, May 2016
their knowledge of a particular place and work with its apparently inescapable ‘givens’ in order to shape and shift its ways of doing and open space for other bodies and other ways of knowing. My goal (the endpoint if I reach it) is to have given an account of what it is to do feminist policy advocacy in the Security Council. My getting to this as the ‘object’ of enquiry is a journey that constitutes significant portions of this text (albeit in layers and fragments that are somehow no longer amenable to easy representation or chronological ordering). In struggling to articulate the space constituted in and through feminist policy interventions, this dissertation became a journey enabled by feminist method and practice. I have left traces of that journey in my text. In doing so I have also left many traces of myself. I have let these remain as a feminist claim on knowledge production.

The question of what it means to approach an enquiry ‘as a feminist’ has been asked many times and continues to be asked. Many claims are made in response. This is a question that goes beyond asking where feminist approaches have been situated in relation to the mainstream disciplinary spaces of International Relations and, to some extent, in Critical Security Studies. In one sense to take such an approach (to ask the question thus) serves to reinforce the very disciplinary foundations and mappings that feminist scholarship has worked to undo. However, as feminist IR scholars such as Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski note, the patterns of

2 See the extensive discussions on this in Marysia Zalewski, "Distracted Reflections on the Production, Narration and Refusal of Feminist Knowledge in International Relations," in Feminist Methodologies for International Relations, ed. Brooke; Stern Ackerly, Maria; True, Jacqui (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).and Brooke; Stern Ackerly, Maria; True, Jacqui, "Feminist Methodologies for International Relations," ibid.
marginalization in those academic spaces are not dissimilar to, nor disconnected from, the marginalization of feminist efforts in the international political realm more broadly conceived. Feminist critiques of state-centric and patriarchal approaches to theorizing within International Relations (as an academic discipline) have been integrally connected with what are seen as more ‘activist efforts’ to shift those political spaces being studied. This is not a matter of mere historical interest. One of the questions animating my project is how to articulate the practices of feminist interventions in these political spaces without simply reproducing a distinction between differently situated feminist bodies designating those who are Knowers and Theorists as separated across institutional lines from those designated Doers and Activists. A demarcation of this sort is what initiated this inquiry and I hold on to this question in an attempt at keeping the politics of feminist knowledge production – of/in/about the UN Security Council – as central.

That, argues Cynthia Enloe is what is distinct about a feminist perspective, that it “puts politics – and thereby power – at the core of the analysis.” A range of scholars in what might be thought of as Feminist International Relations and Feminist Security Studies have noted that this space of politics in feminist research and

activism has often been intimately tied to women’s emancipation. Feminist interventions in international politics – traceable “at least into the nineteenth century” – can be framed as attempts to get those in power (mostly governments acting nationally and internationally) to, at the very least, ‘pay attention’ to the marginalized issues, places, and bodies of those understood (biologically and culturally) as Woman. In a poststructuralist approach (as I attempt here) such a project may appear contradictory, if not impossible. As Linda Åhäll argues, and I hope to demonstrate in what follows, to engage in a poststructuralist analysis need not be incompatible with a commitment to a feminist vision of social justice or a feminist-politics-as-women’s emancipation– even if only as a space of imagining.

To write (to live?) as a post-structural feminist is not to let go of the political significance or potential of these forms – Woman, Feminist, Activist, Scholar, Security etc. – but to let go of their being pre-existing, singular or fixed and, in so doing, to find ways to turn that instability toward other forms of knowing. Annick Wibben argues that “the impossibility of a unitary self…pushes feminist theory to develop new ways of understanding multiplicity.” If subjectivities are fragmented, to situate self and research project, while essential, can never be enough and feminists

7 Åhäll, 158.
thus need to adopt dynamic practices of positioning themselves. Following the work of Kathy Ferguson here, Wibben suggests that recognizing and becoming comfortable with our subjectivities as “mobile, relational, temporal and ambiguous,” (even as we must recognize our interventions as interpretive) opens space for an intersectional feminist politics – one that recognizes our subjectivities as produced across and within multiple and intersecting sites of power. Recognizing the situated nature of all knowledge claims may be the loss of possibility of some Universal/Objective Truth. It is, however, also thus an opening of space for knowledge claims from other places and as located in other bodies – including those marginalized, subordinated or assumed absent. However, this moment of knowledge production is one that, if it is to be feminist, must be rooted in awareness that the researcher is part of a collective. That consciousness translates any of our efforts into engagement with the work of others, others to whom we are accountable.

9 Ibid.
10 To be conscious of the interpreters involvement in all knowledge claims makes available “hermeneutic anchors as temporary resting points” from which to challenge hegemonic practice, ibid., 36.
11 “Theory, is a form of social practice, and as such it lives in the world, simultaneously as it brings the world into existence; whether we are academics, activists, advocates, artists or all of these, we are all theorists. Where feminist insight can truly affect how we think about theory as a mode of doing or being, then, is in the recognition of people other than those normally afforded intellectual priority in IR scholarship as experts – as theorists – in and of their own worlds.” Laura J Shepherd, “Whose International Is It Anyway? Women’s Peace Activists as International Relations Theorists,” International Relations 31, no. 1 (2017): 78.
12 Enloe, 258. This is the case she notes (setting up a list of topics fit for study?) whether: “investigating rape as a war crime, preventing the scourge of domestic violence when the male fighters come home, resolving tensions between groups without resorting to violence, demilitarizing popularized fashion or hero-worship.”
I read this as, in part, a concern for the operation of power within a research or advocacy intervention. But this accountability is one that is attached to a collective beyond one’s research subjects. As a feminist scholar/activist, to be reflexive is to situate ourselves in relation to those we understand as our feminist others. This is not a pre-determined form. Our practices, as feminists, in these undertakings simultaneously trace the form of our desires for this collective and our place in it. It is these (self)reflexive practices that are said to distinguish feminist methodological approaches. However, what follows here is not a claim for such feminist knowledge practices as purely ‘methodological’ – this would somewhat miss their productive potential. Accounting for the position of our own bodies in relation to power and its effects is an important ethical practice for feminists -- particularly for those of us whose bodies are the markers and carriers of relative privilege in these various spaces of knowledge production. However, and, as Annick Wibben emphasises by:

[s]tarting from the perspective of women’s everyday lives, feminists challenge the idea that one can presume a shared understanding of the world in theorizing about it.

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14 Ackerly, 4.

15 Marysia Zalewski, "Distracted Reflections on the Production, Narration and Refusal of Feminist Knowledge in International Relations," ibid.

By taking this seriously, she notes that: “feminists have for the most part, resisted making a distinction between theory and practice and instead assumed an integral relationship between them.”\(^{17}\) As Åhäll observes, feminist scholars—by asking about how bodies matter politically—often have a different way into ‘the political’ and feminist research agendas are often tuned into stories, experiences and representations of peoples/individuals/bodies/ rather than states or political elites.\(^{18}\) To take this position is to pay attention to the everyday (the place and time of bodies) as “a site where shared meanings are negotiated and where gendered constructions of power legitimise certain practices and exclude others.”\(^{19}\) The feminist potential -- the opening of space (here within Security Council practice) begins with this practice of starting elsewhere and attempting as Åhäll suggests: “to make feminist sense differently, to unmake common sense, to create ruptures and dissonances that make us think anew.”\(^{20}\)

And so I begin (again) with the post that appeared at this Chapter’s opening. It appeared on my Facebook feed at a point when I was struggling with how to tell the story I describe in my Preface – one into which it appeared a million narrative threads needed to be woven simultaneously: of structures and rules holding together a common way of doing; of figures whose actions or refusals cannot be absorbed into the institutional pattern; of seemingly predictable geo-politics and capital greed

\(^{17}\) Wibben, 12.
\(^{18}\) Åhäll, 158.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 158-59.
\(^{20}\) Ibid., 159.
running alongside (beneath?) tales of the unexpected and of seemingly trivial
moments that, in retrospect, are the stuff of Events. This post became a node through
which I could connect my narrative to countless others upon which it relies and with
which it coexists; a place into which I could weave stories hoping that they resonate
with sufficient, but not excessive, familiarity.

In a straightforward sense it is a post about Syria, a place I, and likely you,
have only imagined from television news reports, graphic maps, cell-phone images
and perhaps video of varying quality on YouTube, through long-form journalism and
the high-resolution bounties of the war-photographer. At the time of writing in mid-2016, Syria was a place that managed to draw the attention of a US mainstream media otherwise obsessed with the dramas of US presidential politics and terrorism.

The UN Security Council is an institution deeply, and perhaps inescapably, entrenched in war; its raison d’être is war and its policies are ones ‘of’ war. The stories with which I am concerned are thus also stories of war. The narratives from which my own texts are drawn, and the intricate and absorbing patterns of action they describe, are woven with/against a background warp of war that seems to disappear in the everyday. The nodes through which we draw

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21 At the time of writing in mid-2016, Syria was a place that managed to draw the attention of a US mainstream media otherwise obsessed with the dramas of US presidential politics and terrorism.

22 As a graduate student in the UC Santa Cruz Politics department, the ‘Arab Spring’ and the ‘Occupy Movement’ were everywhere fodder for discussion and political theory-testing. As moments from these events made their way out in images and words, a frisson of excitement carried along and through the social-media web, the network of television and radio broadcasts, in conversations over the proverbial water-cooler. I remember too analyses of the intelligentsia that so deftly drew together the complexity of events but so often left behind any tangible idea of bodies left raped, teargassed, shot, so drawn by the promise of Revolution (with a definite capital R) that the stories carried within. For Syrians that Spring was fairly short-lived and the public protests against the Assad regime, which began in late...
our connections to war and from which we then tell stories of war are also to be found in this everyday. And this too felt like an important reason to begin with this post on Syria as I did. As I have come to realize -- and will take up in my final chapter – Telling Relations – perhaps what feminist articulations of the Security Council space produce is, at the very least, an opening up of ambiguous spaces into which feminist accounts of war might be woven.

Despite my not having occupied the physical space that is Syria, this electronic message allows me to position myself in relation to it and it to my own work here. On seeing it I was reminded that the war in Syria has inhabited some part of my consciousness during the entirety of this project. It began in its current form during the first fall quarter of my PhD in September 2011. In the six years since, Syria has become a place devastated, a place where more than a thousand barrels of explosives dropped out of the sky in January 2016 alone, a place from which around 5 million people (the population of Manhattan?) have fled and in whose borders millions more remain displaced and without the most basic means of survival. Of course the effect of the war depends to some extent on how and where you live[d] in relation to Syria before this began and how you find yourself placed now. It is a war that has forced the populations and politicians, across Europe in particular, to encounter in the immediacy of their own states’ spaces the suffering and strain on

January of 2011, were violently repressed by mid-March of that same year. By July of that year groups of Syrians had begun to coalesce in armed opposition – in groups that have since proliferated, re-formed and splintered, joining others from other places, with other causes, all defying easy stories of (inter/national) solidarity.
resources that war brings, even as their elites, invested in weapons, see profits soar and ISIS loom. It is a war that has brought brutal racism again to the fore; it is a war that is testing alliances and reanimating old antagonisms – a new ‘hot war’ in what Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev once referred to, with rhetorical flourish, as the site of the “new cold war” (with Russia self-cast as victim of undue vilification).²³ If public opinion is anything to go by, it is a war that starkly exemplifies every bit of the hypocrisy of power (and for some the inevitable failure) embedded in the structure of the UN and its Security Council – a story of frustration and anger that underlies the post above. Syria is a name that now invokes this war and these stories rather than the haunting myth-laden whispers of history heard on the roads of Damascus.

My own sense of this place emerges in the cloud of ‘updates’, stories and images posted by people whose lives/work/politics/organizational affiliations, connect them in some way to that place and they to me. My imagination of Syria, perhaps to a greater or lesser extent than yours, fed by articles, blogs, reports, recommendations and casual opinions shared (quite often written) by feminists working in a variety of institutional spaces in fields described by such names as ‘disarmament,’ ‘human rights,’ ‘peacebuilding,’ ‘gender equality,’ and ‘security

²³ "You could say even more sharply: we have fallen into a new cold war,” he said. “Nearly on a daily basis, we are being blamed for the most terrible threat to NATO as a whole, to Europe, to America, to other countries. They make scary movies where Russia starts a nuclear war. I sometimes wonder: are we in 2016 or 1962?" The NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, rejected Medvedev’s accusations: “Russia’s rhetoric, posture and exercises of its nuclear forces are aimed at intimidating its neighbours, undermining trust and stability in Europe.” Chris and Agencies Johnston, "Russia Pm Warns of ‘New Cold War’ Amid Syria Accusations," The Guardian (2016).
sector reform’. Although some have or do work also in academic institutions, for the most part they have spent a considerable portion of their professional careers located in international NGOs, as UN staff or as working-level international diplomats. Most are women who I first encountered in the physical space of New York and through the institutional space of the United Nations at a particular point in time (somewhere between 2005 and 2010) when I was working at the UN office of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom. In that moment we became connected by virtue of our organizational affiliations and the responsibilities within our jobs that saw us engaging in different ways in the Security Council’s policy on Women, Peace and Security. Indeed it is our shared experience of feminist intervention in and through this policy space that constituted the initial grounds of our conversation for this project. These took place during the course of a series of semi-structured interviews I conducted in New York in 2014 and 2015. Most continue their work on issues that are considered ‘WPS-related,’ albeit in different roles. Had I continued to occupy my earlier position at WILPF the focus of my own work would have been on working for a feminist peace in places like Syria.24 Those whose stories of feminist policy advocacy find their way here, are embedded in this network of people whose experiences, research and actions mediate my knowledge of war and of places like Syria.

The connection made between us here, that which made this post a node for

my own account, was its focus on words and the use of language as the site of politics. Like international relations more broadly, the Security Council is a place tightly bound up in language – even if this is hidden from view in much traditional IR scholarship. The diplomatic system in which international relations is rooted is indebted to language and the persuasiveness of a threat communicated in language, is “often derived from a past correspondence between word and deed.” It is language and the potential of words that provides the red-thread, the line of connection running between the geography that is Syria and the space in which this dissertation is situated and encountered. Running between the UN Security Council policymaking community and the material and psychic devastation of war lies language and it is through language that those vastly different spaces are comprehended and connected. In some ways this is a fairly obvious (and general) point. Language, as our method of communication, is fairly easily understood as inextricably linked with social life. Words can be used to describe and react to material objects, ideas and emotions or our relationships with those. Sentences can suggest causal links or be constructed to express approval, frustration, respect or disdain. They can be seen as tools to coerce, constrain, inspire or encourage action. Language can also be used to construct a

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26 Fierke, 67.
narrative through which we are able to understand complex relationships between subjects and objects, between the ideational and material. And, as this Facebook post suggests, places of politics can be found within and through language.

Here the question asked is: “in what kind of world do we live where continuous Syrian regime airstrikes to systematically wipe out healthcare, hospitals and its own citizens [can be] considered a ‘humanitarian disaster? And how many more airstrikes before it no longer is on "a brink" of a humanitarian disaster?” Surely the number of deaths and the destruction of hospitals and healthcare systems indicate that the disaster (however attributed) has already happened? The tone of incredulity seems to open a space of dissonance that demands resolution. This post implies a narrative of the war in Syria, of who is responsible for the bombing of Aleppo and of who has failed by not responding in some way considered appropriate or ethically required. Its story is one of a failure of particular subjects – a failure on the part of “the UN, the ICRC and the whole international humanitarian community.” Global politics contains similarly troubling examples of almost absurd refusals to apply terms in cases that seem almost definitional – one that comes easily to mind is the initial reluctance/refusal of US (and high-level UN diplomats) to apply the term ‘genocide’ to the violence being perpetrated across Rwanda in early 1994. In such cases, the basic mode of (legal) analysis would be to consider whether a set of specific material facts can be considered as analogous to those ‘described’ in a legal framework and whether, having been so identified, there arises an obligation to act on the part of, for example in the Syrian case, the Security Council or individual Member
States. A refusal, as in the Syrian and Rwandan examples here, occurs at the time of interpreting whether a particular word has a meaning that could be said to cover a set of contemporary events or material facts (as they are interpreted). Denying the existence of a specific obligation (through arguing for the non-applicability of a legal term) is one way to avoid the actions such a trigger might assume or require.

While there are many reasons that might be posited for the refusals on the part of the Security Council Council’s membership, to take the steps thought necessary to ending the war in Syria – reluctance or refusal (at the time of this post) to name the conditions prevailing in Syria as a ‘humanitarian disaster’ certainly look like a reluctance to make the preservation of human life a priority. 28 Many of these reasons for inaction would be particular to that war. Others might resonate too in relation to other places of war. Some accounts would tell of the geopolitical bargains of the Council’s five Permanent Members as they individually and collectively perpetuate their dominance in the political economy of war. Others might trace the story of this war through the stories of individuals or of the political desires and machinations of leaders such as Putin, Assad, Obama and Erdogan (and now, unfortunately, Trump). Each of these stories could, in its own way, answer the initial question: “in what kind of world do we live that?” …… and I look back at the interview with one of my interlocutors – a feminist working as a state representative in a Mission to the UN in

New York. The refusal or denial of meaning, and thus applicability, may come at a much earlier moment. It may take place in anticipatory ways and in relation to, as yet, unidentified circumstances. These lines in transcript on my desk immediately take on new significance.

On humanitarian issues, we cannot talk about humanitarian access. Even though you have millions of people starving because there is no humanitarian access, you can't talk about it. There are some attempts to talk about the ‘timeliness of delivery’ of assistance, but even that is unacceptable.29

The refusal to act in Syria is one that takes place through a refusal to speak or hear particular words. The world to which the Lebanese activist gestures, the world in which there is inaction in the face of people dying of starvation is the same one in which my interlocutors intervene. The Security Council – a political terrain whose surface is constituted by words. This is not an unusual site of politics. As Raymond Williams notes in his influential *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, some “important social and historical processes occur within language.”30 He acknowledges that, particularly for words involving important ideas and values, the history of their meanings reveals contestation between groups over ‘correct’ usages and “conscious changes, or consciously different uses.”31

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30 Williams argues that the central aim of his book is, in fact, “to show that some important social and historical processes occur within language, in ways which indicate how integral the problems of meaning and relationship really are.” Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Revised Edition ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).
31 Ibid.
In the chapters that follow, I explore feminist interventions in international politics that take place on these grounds of linguistic contestation. The policy output of multilateral policymaking fora of international organizations have, in fact, often been taken as an important focus in feminist efforts to bring material change.\(^{32}\) Attempts to influence the behaviour of institutional actors have taken many forms but the ones in focus here are those marked in the language of policy in a formal and legalistic sense.\(^{33}\) These feminist ‘meaning-making’ strategies (as I have come to call them) have, “aimed at influencing the inner workings of international organizations as well as their policy creation and output.”\(^{34}\) Beneath such feminist (and other) efforts to shift the language of institutions such as the Security Council lies an assumption, or perhaps simply a hope, that if we get the words ‘right,’ if meaning is fixed in an ‘appropriately’ feminist way that this will shift material conditions in some desired manner in the various possible spaces in which that policy will be implemented or articulated in the future. While this is a simplifying (and transitory) assumption it is one I prefer to hold onto for now – not because I see it as unproblematic but rather

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\(^{32}\) Caglar, 2. As Martha Finnemore and Katherine Sikkink argue, such institutions matter both as platforms for those they term ‘norm entrepreneurs’ and also for the way in which, once a norm is accepted, institutions facilitate its entrenchment. The authors note too, that the overall agenda, structures, and hiring practices of institutions significantly shape the content of the norms they produce. Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics and Political Change," *International Organization* 52, no. 4 (1998): 901.


\(^{34}\) Caglar et al draw a distinction between that which influences an organization’s ‘inner workings’ and ‘their policy.’ As often as not, influencing the ‘inner workings’ of an institution – how it makes its decisions and whether it decides to act or not – are shaped and contained in the ‘policy’ or law it creates (the distinction between these latter terms themselves slippery and open to interpretation). Caglar, 2.
because, *despite* its being problematic, it is the underlying and enabling script of the United Nations and of the policymaking space I am attempting to trace and, it is one I do not feel it my place to simply refuse. Whether or not a focus of feminist efforts on *policy* or even on these international institutions – the World Bank, the IMF, the United Nations – is the “right” strategy is a question that echoes in many places (often only indirectly and faintly). These questions lie (perhaps lurk would be a better word) beneath the surface of so many stories of feminist engagement with the ‘international’ space and in the accounts of the WPS policy of the Security Council that I take up. Although I cannot provide a definitive answer – if there is one that I would even be entitled to claim – I do feel it imperative that we (feminists?) continue to ask it – not least of all when we are positioned so as to influence or critique those policies (and their effects).

These efforts to shift the language of institutions so that they better meet the needs and interests of women have, in large part, been successful. Feminists have acknowledged, for example, that “[n]ot a single international institution has failed to introduce the concept of gender …into its stated mission and publications.”35 Other assessments have concluded that elements of feminism have been “absolutely incorporated into political and institutional life” and the lives of women in many places positively impacted as a result.36 The Security Council too has been the focus

of such feminist efforts and its Resolution 1325 is commonly understood to be the outcome of such intervention.

As I take up in the Chapter 2: Structuring Objects, this resolution and the WPS policy agenda it initiated, are the enabling texts of the policy space in which I am interested. As the trace and product of its practices, these texts are the initial surface through which the institution of the Security Council comes to be understood. Although widely accepted as the result of successful feminist intervention in international security, these texts are also the object of sustained feminist critique. The view around which many of these coalesce, is that the feminist potential of 1325 (and the policy agenda it inaugurated) has not been met. There was something in these, as I have already suggested, that felt deeply dissatisfying and that served as the initial grounding for this project. As I suggest at the end of that Chapter if the struggle over language in policy is understood as a struggle to secure particular meanings in an institution, it is important also to understand that such will “almost inevitably involve the most microscopic struggles around individual and institutional practices” and it is these that we should explore. However, that does not, in and of itself, suggest an obvious starting point for analysis.

Exploring contestations of meaning in and through particular signifiers – an approach suggested by the work of Williams, Koselleck and Skinner referenced above – is one way to approach the enquiry. Koselleck explicitly acknowledges the

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potential for deliberate engagement within language – especially through “concepts whose semantic ‘carrying capacity’ extends further than the ‘mere’ words employed in the socio-political domain.” Quintin Skinner, of the Cambridge School, also focuses on words of this type and the characteristics which make them amenable to being used in efforts to effect change. His work attends to the way that change happens within language – an analysis he suggests begins by asking “what exactly are we debating about a word when we find ourselves debating whether or not it ought to be applied as a description of a particular action or state of affairs?”

In this Facebook post, the text anchoring this discussion, the disagreement concerned how the particular terms ‘humanitarian disaster,’ ‘war crimes’ and ‘massacre,’ are understood and what actions such understandings demand. In the WPS policy field, the disagreements are over understandings of terms like ‘gender’ and ‘women’ and ‘security’ and this is reflected in a range of feminist critiques of that space. However, such an analysis of meaning-making need not be an attempt to somehow find the ‘correct’ meaning nor necessarily an evaluation of possible meanings. Rather, as is the case of naming the situation in Syria with one concept or

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39 We can think here of the potential contestation over the application of the word “mutilation” to the practice previously referred to as “female genital circumcision.” Skinner argues that in such cases we might be disagreeing “about the criteria for applying the word; about whether the agreed criteria are present in a given set of circumstances; or about what range of speech-acts the word can be used to perform.” Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," in *Meaning and Context, Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 116-35. ibid., 130.
another, exploring a term’s ‘meaning’ can open space for the analysis of a wider set of social narratives that connect through a particular signifier.

Here a brief consideration of the refusal to apply a term brought into view narratives of global politics (admittedly over simplified) that both questioned the presence of ‘agreed criteria’ for application and, indeed the possible acts which it can perform as a ‘speech act’ (to loosely use Skinner’s frame of reference.) Figuring out the nature of the ‘disagreement’ when there is a disagreement about a word can open possibilities for thinking through the dynamics and relationships of power in social arrangements such as the UN Security Council. 40 As Skinner argued, if we want to understand certain courses of action, it is necessary to make reference to the prevailing possibilities of language of society. 41 However, and as I go on to explore, our view of the social conditions of possibility for language is profoundly affected by our more general articulation of the connection between language and this thing we call ‘the social.’ For his part Skinner sees the relationship between “our social vocabulary and our social world” as mutually constitutive and argues that the distinction between social reality and the language of description of that reality is an artificial one. 42

In Chapter 3: Place of Practice, I take up this position and begin with the approach of feminist WPS scholar Laura Shepherd who argues for reflections on

40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
international policy in the area of gender, peacebuilding and security, as “usefully understood through the lens of poststructuralist theory.” Post-structuralism of course covers a variety of intellectual trends but my work in this text primarily engages the line of discourse theory first rendered by Ernesto Laclau and Chantalle Mouffe (and since elaborated by David Howarth and others at the Essex School of Discourse Analysis). If we begin by thinking about discourse not simply as language that is deployed by actors but as very much part of the social fabric then, at a basic level, discourses are systems of sense or meaning-making practices. These practices establish a system of relations, forming the identities of and between subjects and objects and “providing subject positions with which social agents can identify.” Interventions in meaning-making can thus be understood as an attempt to structure a broader field of meaning and make certain ways of acting and being possible or thought of as the ‘natural thing’ to do in a given situation.

46 Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.
47 Laclau and Mouffe refer to such signifiers as nodal points that serve to bind together and structure elements into a particular system of meaning or chain of signification. Kevin Adamson, "The Construction of Romanian Social Democracy (1989-1996)," ibid., 7. See also
Although discourse is concerned with words and language as mediators of meaning, as I argue in this Chapter, an analysis of discourse and discursive practices need not be limited to the analysis of speech or text in any conventional sense. The actions (and/or inactions) of the Security Council as institution are situated in (and constitutive of) complex and contested histories and relationships that reach far beyond the way those are manifested in legal texts. As I illustrate by providing alternative readings of the textual practices analysed by Shepherd, limiting our analysis of WPS discourse to linguistic practices (and particularly those in policy texts themselves) provides a limited view of the greater context in which meaning-making takes place.

To take up Laclau and Mouffe’s approach we must begin with an assumption that “all objects and approach, actions are meaningful, and that their meaning is conferred by historically specific systems of rules.”\(^48\) The meaning of any particular object, subject or action is dependent on how its identity and significance is constructed by/within a particular discourse and fixed in a moment in time -- and in this, the operation of power is everywhere relevant.\(^49\) That is, “discourses and the identities produced through them are inherently political entities that involve the construction of antagonisms and the exercise of power.”\(^50\) To accept their approach is

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\(^48\) Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2.


to take up a position always internal to a world of signifying practices and objects.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, and in keeping with their general approach, rather than the applying a pre-existing theory to a set of empirical objects, I have used their analytical tools as ways to open, read and explore a particular social space from other places. In doing so I raise questions of how we might articulate our relationship to policy texts and the spaces in which they exist if we shift the space from which we read their ‘conditions of possibility’? How might we think the political space of the Security Council and of WPS policy differently? Is it possible to move beyond an analysis of policy texts and even of formal written texts and yet keep sight of their significance, work with the resonance of their forms? How else might we account for the historically constituted grounds or terrain of WPS discourse if we seek its traces elsewhere?

In Chapter 4 – Troubling Narratives: Locating Failure, I take up this question and open to analysis feminist critiques of WPS policy produced within academic spaces – those recognized by mainstream scholarship as the site of theorizing. I return then to reflect on how these narratives of the failures of WPS policy produced in me the experience of disjuncture with which I began this project. The real discomfort of being reflexive, Enloe warns, “comes when trying to draw the line between reflexive candor and unwitting self-absorption.”\textsuperscript{52} This has certainly been the case here.

That it was ‘my’ experience(s) that seemed so often to produce the disjuncture felt complicated. I am haunted by the fear of falling into that much maligned activity

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\textsuperscript{51} Howarth and Stavrakakis, 3. 
\textsuperscript{52} Enloe.
known as ‘navel-gazing’ -- well, perhaps not maligned per se but certainly thought inappropriate in spaces for sharing intellectually and socially ‘worthwhile’ thoughts and in itself, not likely to produce knowledge worth sharing. Was there something in my annoyance or frustration at particular narratives that, quite frankly, was better dealt with over the course of a vigorous swim or in therapy? Perhaps there was an unwarranted defensiveness, an avoidance of accountability that I should try to quarantine and undo? And, realizing the impossibility of achieving that (in any complete sense) how could I at least attempt to provide an account of myself? Was I reading-in an accusation of failure when there was none? And why indeed did I feel implicated? In one sense this last question has a straightforward answer - I had worked at an organization, and run a project established to monitor and advocate for the implementation of the Security Council’s policy on women, peace and security -- at that time, it was a policy primarily constituted by one Resolution – that known as ‘1325.’ Actions described as being taken by ‘civil society’ or by ‘feminist peace advocates’ at the UN Security Council in relation to SCR 1325 or WPS policy were, if they took place between 2005 and 2010, quite possibly mine. Where one’s actions are described as leading to the consequences then criticized, it is hardly surprising that one might also feel ‘criticized.’ But, as I found upon reflection, that was not quite where my problem lay. Or, at least not in a way that felt intellectually meaningful.

Although I do not engage in a ‘theorizing’ of narrative as such, I move from the position articulated by Wibben that narratives:
are the sites of the exercise of power; through narratives, we not only investigate but also invent an order for the world. They police our imagination by taming aspirations and adjusting desires to social reality.  

I argue that, even if not deliberately structured to do so, critiques of the WPS Agenda simultaneously produce in their wake the identities of the subjects and objects of which they tell. As subjects (and objects) are cast in particular positions (in time and space) the relations between them too are produced -- the relations, for example, as between the WPS Agenda as Object and the UN Security Council as Subject or, as between NGOs and Scholars, between Feminists and between differently located Women (who appear as both subjects and objects). Such telling of relations also implies particular hierarchies, dynamics and processes of production that, in turn, shape and are shaped by understandings and imaginings of the Security Council’s policymaking space. The telling of the Security Council policy space matters, it is one that, in some sense, constitutes the horizon of possibilities for action there on the part of historically-situated social agents -- including various feminist subjects such as myself. Like those produced in policy spaces, these narratives locate failure in particular places, as resulting from particular events or intentions and, as the responsibility of particular actors.

In Narratives of Failure: Suspicious Objects (& their Failed Subjects) I revisit a particular narrative of the failures of WPS policy discourse and argue that the way in which we account for failures of meaning produces various feminist objects/subjects who carry the risks and costs of failure and whose potential for

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53 Wibben, 2.
intervening in the future as feminists is occluded. In critiquing the outcomes of feminist interventions in policy, I argue, we should also enquire after the strategies and tactics embedded, produced and foreclosed by the stories we tell of these and of the texts with which they are engaged. These stories (and how we understand ourselves in relation to them) profoundly shape the sense of the world we inhabit and of what is to be done or can be done and by whom.

In Chapter 5: Subjects of Practice I take up the positions of the ‘Failed Feminist’ subjects produced through my deconstructive readings in the preceding chapter. The continuing vulnerability of any particular position in discourse means that the rise of a hegemonic foundation is not the point at which politics stops. Laclau argues that continuing discursive articulation is only limited “by the availability of signifiers (elements) and the creativity of the political forces involved in the articulatory practice.”[^54] I go on to work through articulations of the subjects produced in the process of reflexivity (and which I came to read into the spaces of disjuncture) - those for which the failure narratives held no place. The first of these, introduced briefly in Encountering Metis, is a figure (and concept) I came to adopt as a way to think through accounting for the practices of those feminists assumed co-opted by the system in which they intervene. Michel De Certeau’s work in *The Practice of Everyday Life* – with which I work extensively in the remaining chapters – is, as he introduces it “part of a continuing investigation of the ways in which users –

[^54]: Howarth and Stavrakakis, 7.
commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate.” Rather than seeing this as a position of inertia -- or even paralysis -- I operate on the possibility (offered by the ultimate instability of meaning) that these interventions might trace narratives that, by not ‘fitting’ “into a particular social, political or symbolic order,” might disrupt that order. De Certeau’s work offers this promise.

Although not explicitly framed as an enquiry in discourse, the space in which De Certeau works is discursive. The ways of operating he describes are, essentially, ways of working in and through the dominant/hegemonic forms of a discursive formation. Although many feminist analyses work with conceptual signifiers like Gender, Conflict, or Security, I argue that in the Security Council’s WPS policy space, it is the figure I have come to name the Woman-in-Conflict that functions as the object of contention. I explore the deployment and embodiment or performance of this figure in the statements delivered by women from Civil Society in the space of the Council’s Open Debates on WPS.

I return to De Certeau’s work in Chapter 6: Logics of Practice and work with stories of feminist policy intervention told by my interlocutors (and drawn from the transcripts of our interview-based conversations). I argue that these ways of operating offer evidence of the ‘cunning intelligence’ of metis. This and the remaining chapters

55 Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), xi. His analytical focus is on the articulation of everyday or popular culture by those who are its ‘consumers’ or ‘users’ rather than its makers and where the available ways of using are determined within the system. Ibid., xiii. He is interested in this project in isolating that production of the system that takes place in the process of its utilization.
56 Wibben, 2.
are structured so as to consider these practices or behaviours against patterns of action thought characteristic of metis; these are its relationship to the occasion (or situation); to disguise; and to paradoxical invisibility.

In my concluding chapter, Telling Practice, I take up the challenge thinking beyond feminist interventions as being mere ‘uses’ that simply reproduce those practices we seek to undo. I continue my exploration of these interventions as an enactment of the logics of metis. I explore here the final characteristic of metis – its relation to paradoxical invisibility. I suggest that being attentive to the ways in which feminist interventions draw upon and articulate feminist relationships might offer a way to think these interventions (and the space they describe) differently and, as something more than the mere words in policy texts.

This is, however, an account that began in the political space between words and worlds. I thus begin with the words that anchor the Security Council’s WPS policy space – the central object in most accounts of feminist interventions in international security policy. Words that have become so ‘commonplace’ that they have been reduced to numbers: 1325.
Chapter 2: Structuring Objects

“1325”

For most people it is just another number. But to others, even without prefacing it with the series of letters ‘UNSCR’ to mark its institutional source, it is instantly recognizable as signifying a far larger world of meaning. For those who would consider themselves part of the ‘WPS’ community at the UN it is hard to imagine not having a sense of the Security Council Resolution known conventionally as “1325” (said, following the US style, as ‘thirteen twenty-five’ rather than, for example, ‘one, three, two, five’ or, alternatively, ‘one thousand, three hundred and twenty five’). I have heard it so many times, said it so many times, that any other way rings a discordant note, feels strange in the mouth. Imagining ‘not-knowing’ (the numbers, their automatic flow off the tongue, their obvious importance) feels odd, amusing even. Trying this thought experiment made several of my primary interlocutors laugh out loud. This wasn’t exactly a formal interview question in the conversations I had with them but it did come up in several. As I read through the transcripts I noticed it emerge as a ‘thing’ as we thought through together what it is to do (and learn to do) WPS advocacy in the Security Council. CM reflected that she had:

“only actually learned about 1325 two years before I joined. So I joined in 2005. I wasn’t part of the whole movement for 1325. I learned about it from a student who was writing a paper about the Dayton accords, and I was just really interested and completely surprised that it existed.”57

Another former colleague, who had then been intensely involved in policy advocacy as a senior representative of a large human rights organization, reflected on this earlier ‘not knowing,’ with a sense of amazement. She recalled, with a measure of not-entirely-mock horror, how in the interview for her position as Advocacy Director for the Women’s Rights Division, she “didn’t even remember the number for the resolution,” going on to say:

it’s the kind of thing (where) you just learn the vocabulary afterwards. And it’s not like it matters what number it is. But it did – sort of. I remember in the interview they corrected me, ‘no, it’s not 1328 (or whatever I said), it’s 1325’…and I was like ‘whoops, that wasn't so good.”

She got the job and some 7 years later, wondered out loud:

why didn’t I know? 1328 just sounds weird, but of course if you’re not working on it, it doesn’t sound weird. 

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59 Ibid.
The resolution that inaugurated the Security Council’s work on ‘Women, Peace and Security’ – an issue of which the institution remains actively seized. Resolution 1325’ or ‘SCR 1325 (2000)’ or ‘UNSCR 1325 (2000)’ (as your mode of delivery, context and style guide deems fit), was adopted on the 31st October 2000. SCR 1325. Its preamble, usefully summarized by Cockburn, “acknowledges both the specific effect of armed conflict on women and women’s role in preventing and resolving conflict, setting these in the context of the Security Council’s responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.” Broadly speaking, the underlying aims of SCR 1325, as expressed in the resolution itself, are: to address the “disproportionate and unique impact of armed conflict on women;” to recognize “the under-valued and under-utilized contributions women make to conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution and peace-building;” and to stress the importance of their equal and full participation as active agents in peace and security.” In its 18 operative paragraphs, the Council:

appealed for the greater participation of women in decision-making in national, regional and international institutions; their further involvement in peacekeeping, field operations, mission consultation and peace negotiations; increased funding and other support for UN bodies’ gender work; enhanced state commitments to women’s and girls’ human rights and their protection under international law; the introduction of special measures against sexual

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61 Cynthia Cockburn, From Where We Stand: War, Women’s Activism and Feminist Analysis (London: Zed Books, 2007), 139.
violence in armed conflict; and the consideration of women’s and girls’ needs in humanitarian, refugee, disarmament and post-conflict settings.\textsuperscript{63}

As is the case in relation to other provisions of international law covering so-called ‘women’s issues,’ the adoption of Resolution 1325 by the UN Security Council is most often told as being the response of governments (and the institutions they produce and formally control) to the demands and lobbying of women’s organizations. Most famously, the 1995 adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a multilateral instrument that anchors work on gender equality and gender-mainstreaming in the UN system, and within states, was seen as profoundly shaped by the women’s movement.\textsuperscript{64} The adoption of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in Vienna in 1993 is told as the result of successful feminist efforts to have violence against women recognized as a human rights issue.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed the establishment in 2011 of a new UN agency, UN Women, is largely credited to a years-long extensive lobbying effort by a transnational civil-society coalition geared towards the reform of the gender equality architecture of the UN.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} Cockburn, 139.
\textsuperscript{65} Jain.
\textsuperscript{66} Margot C Baruch, "Engendering the Un Architecture: Feminist Advocacy in the Establishment of Un Women" (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2012); Caglar, xvi.
In relation to SCR 1325, feminist anti-war scholar and long-time peace activist Cynthia Cockburn – in her 2007 book *From Where We Stand: war, women’s activism and feminist analysis* – calls it “the most remarkable institutional achievement of women’s anti-war movements to date” – the emphasis on the women’s anti-war movement being a subtle but important distinction from more general characterizations.\(^{67}\) It has been characterized time and again as a ‘landmark’ and as a “watershed moment for the global women’s movement (a characterization frequently heard since).”\(^{68}\) Elsewhere it has been framed as “a revolutionary transformation of rhetoric regarding issues of women, peace and security.”\(^{69}\) As the co-editors Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd remark, in the 2016 special issue of *International Affairs* (in which a version of the chapter The Woman-in-Conflict appears), “[t]he case for the novelty of UNSCR 1325 as both a Security Council resolution and a wide-ranging policy artefact has been made well, and often.”\(^{70}\) There are indeed few critics of UNSCR 1325 as such – or, as Kirby and Shepherd put it, “few who would openly dispute its headline ambition: to achieve global gender equality.”\(^{71}\) I am less certain of this framing of the resolution’s ‘headline ambition,’ but I would agree that there are few who would say the adoption of the resolution is itself regrettable.

\(^{67}\) Cockburn, 138.


\(^{71}\) Ibid.
The commitments in this initial resolution have, to varying degrees, been developed in the seven further resolutions on the Women, Peace and Security theme adopted between June 2008 and the present date – often referred to (not unproblematically), as the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.\textsuperscript{72} Collectively, these policies have driven and informed significant operational shifts across the United Nations system and, some argue, “have clarified and deepened the WPS programme” within the broader institution.\textsuperscript{73} Significantly, and unusually for a Security Council resolution, it has prompted a policy response at the national level with many states adopting National Action Plans (NAPs). The defense and security policies of several other multilateral entities, including NATO and the EU have also begun to include commitments based on 1325 and subsequent WPS resolutions.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textit{Stories of: 1325/Failed Potential}

While SCR 1325 and the emergent WPS policy of the Security Council have been generally celebrated, this policy has also been subject to extensive analysis and sustained critique from feminists situated in a range of spaces: in academia, in and around multilateral policy fora and, in the places in which policies are being implemented (or not). As Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd point out in their 2015


\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
review, while “[t]he field of WPS literature is extensive detailed and crowded, much of the research and subsequent critique can be loosely categorized as concerning failures in implementation” – the so-called Implementation Gap. As they note,

>[w]ithin the think-tank and NGO community, research has understandably been focused on progress against the major WPS indicators, and on narrowing the distance between New York and the various ‘fields’ in which the agenda has to be implemented.\textsuperscript{75,76}

However, and as they go on to point out, “the advances and limits of the WPS agenda are traceable across multiple registers.”\textsuperscript{77} Amongst and alongside these critiques of implementation efforts are those that concern the shape and direction of WPS discourse and of the ‘WPS Agenda’ itself – certain of these have, perhaps by dint of repetition, taken on the character of ‘common knowledge’ in accounts of this policy area. The view around which most critiques coalesce is that the policy discourse that has emerged over time has not lived up to the transformative (feminist) promise of Resolution 1325 (or of the feminist ideas it was meant to represent).\textsuperscript{78} Much of this critique has been developed in relation to the so-called ‘gender mainstreaming project.’\textsuperscript{79} While accepting the normative premise of these interventions, many

[\textsuperscript{75}Ibid., 253.\textsuperscript{76}Ibid., 252.\textsuperscript{77}Ibid., 374.\textsuperscript{78}See for example the critiques discussed in, Dianne Otto, "The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade," \textit{Melbourne Journal of International Law} 10, no. 1 (2009); Kirby and Shepherd, "The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda," 252; Laura J Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice} (London; New York: Zed Books, 2008).\textsuperscript{79}That may mean – and the footnote trails I have followed suggests this to be the case – that the research conducted in relation to gender mainstreaming in say, the UN’s Human Rights Council, is simply read-in as constituting a failing of the same project in the Security Council. I don’t doubt that the same problems that beset the system in one part are at least somewhat applicable in others. I am, however, hesitant to simply assume that failings in one part of the
feminists have pointed out that this powerful and well-theorized feminist concept has become entirely depoliticized and its feminist intent and content sacrificed in the process of its institutionalization, mainstreamed into mediocrity or invisibility. It has, they accuse, been “stripped of its critical content” and turned into a mere technocratic tool. Angela McRobbie, for example, argues that the mandated requirements of ‘mainstreaming gender’ have been increasingly enacted and interpreted within institutions, as “a neo-liberal reorganization strategy” that reproduces patriarchal forms.

Although concerned with the concept of gender and the meaning this is given in the Council’s policy discourse, the primary focus of many WPS critiques is how shifts in the WPS Agenda are connected to the representations of those considered its system are identical with those in another. In one sense it is also of little use to speak of the failings of the Human Rights Council when addressing the Security Council – institutionally there is little reason to listen. As long as UN Member States are willing to hide behind the separate pillars and entities on their organizational chart (to avoid liability or resist change), progress or failure in one piece of the machinery cannot, in a political sense, sensibly be made to stand in for the whole. The Human Rights Council is an institutions with which I am quite unfamiliar – known to me mostly by the stories from colleagues who would travel to Geneva to also do advocacy in that forum. Those were stories of States (the Usual Suspects known to those in that sphere) actively resisting and throwing up institutional roadblocks at every turn – desperate to continue their state-sanctioned forms of violence against women and against those whose Sexual Orientations and/or Gender Identities (and Expressions?) (SOGI for short) are considered outside the norm. The forms of violence that activists want to have recognized as such by the Human Rights Council are not different from those experienced by the people living lives regulated/occupied/protected by the Security Council.

82 McRobbie, 154.
primary beneficiaries: women in or affected by conflict. This focus on representations produced in/by policy texts and implementation programs is important – particularly given that amongst the key aims of those advocating for SCR 1325 was to shift the gender stereotypes seen in narratives of war and to push for understandings that supported women’s representation at and participation in, international security institutions and decision making. One line of argument is that, particularly in the adoption of additional WPS resolutions, the holistic approach of SCR 1325 has been reduced such that women continue to be portrayed primarily as victims. This was the very representation, so the argument goes, that SCR 1325, with its focus on women’s participation in peace and security decision-making, was intended to counteract. In particular, it is argued that the policy agenda has become increasingly focused on sexual violence, as evidenced by several thematic resolutions adopted since 2008 as well as in more recent country-specific work. Such a focus, it is argued, is detrimental to achieving a long-term feminist peace. The policy narrowing risks (some say evidences) a loss of comprehensive and nuanced understandings of sexual violence and its connections with political participation and with militarism. Policy focused on sexual violence in conflict, the argument goes, simply reinforces the image of women as victims in need of the paternalistic protection of international security actors. The second aspect of this critique, often drawn together with the first, is that the developments in policy on WPS indicate an approach that lessens rather than furthers

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83 Otto; Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice.*
84 Kirby and Shepherd, "Reintroducing Women, Peace and Security." {Pratt, 2011 #454}
opposition to militarism. For example, efforts to increase the number of women in peacekeeping forces and national militaries, while in one sense meeting claims for women’s full and equal participation in peace and security decision-making, are also seen as antithetical to feminist visions of demilitarized peace. On the whole these critiques make a certain kind of sense for me. I certainly don’t disagree with them. I have heard from those better positioned to make the assessment that there is a glut of activity within the UN focused on sexual violence in conflict that this skewed focus can have perverse effects on the ways in which UN and INGO services are allocated in communities living in the midst of violent conflict. 85 There is, simultaneously, limited progress on changing institutional design and working methods so as to encourage the ongoing and meaningful participation by women in peace and security decision-making (within and outside the UN). 86 These arguments resonate. I do not doubt their veracity. And yet, there was something in these accounts of the ‘WPS Agenda’ and their critiques of the direction of WPS policy, that rankled.

Some feminist critics have argued that, “the feminist project in international law is losing ground” even, they add, “as many are celebrating its victories.” 87 That

86 See for example, Anne Marie Goetz, "Will the Un Secretary-General Send Misogynistic Heads Rolling?," openDemocracy 50.50 (2017), https://www.opendemocracy.net/5050/anne-marie-goetz/gender-parity-plan-united-nations.and the discussion in Shepherd. and Kirby and Shepherd, "The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda."
87 Otto, 15.
last sentiment is the one that gives me pause. Are the ‘many’ who are celebrating the victories of this feminist project “in international law” separate from those who judge it to be “losing ground”? Does engaging in the celebration and recognizing the accomplishment of having laws adopted preclude engaging in (credible) critique? And where indeed is the failure located when we use the language of co-optation, ‘working on the inside’ or ‘sedimented meanings’?

The challenge of shifting or resisting hegemonic institutional meanings is a problem not unique to feminist activism but is faced in other arenas by those seeking to introduce progressive or emancipatory agendas to the work of institutions through shifting the language of policy.88 Similar arguments are made for example, in relation to the introduction of the concept of ‘social capital’ to the work of the World Bank.89 A common refrain is that particular actors within institutions (such as the UN) have the power to “dictate the terms of the debate” but lack sufficient interest or commitment to shape it in ways that would satisfy feminist demands.90 Others allege, or at least imply, that those who are meant to be ‘working on the inside’ for the feminist project have abandoned the struggle or, as is often averred, have ‘been co-

89 Harriss.
90 Christie, 184.
opted. However, if as I suggest in the chapter that follows, feminist interventions are understood as meaning-making practices situated within a particular institutional space, how might we then open these accusations? Reading the place from which feminist critiques [emanate] and in which they are situated is, I argue, crucial both to understanding specific critiques and to figuring their place in a broader feminist politics. If we want to understand certain courses of action (for example the choice of certain words or phrases and/or the refusal of others) how do we account, as we must, for the prevailing possibilities of language? Furthermore, I argue that the signs of policy success or failure can also be read from a variety of texts and the choice of these texts (as sites of success or failure) and our manner of reading them are consequential. To take this approach requires thinking through the Security Council policy space as a discursive one – a task I take up in the chapter that follows.

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Chapter 3: The Place of Practice

Mapping and Occupying the Discursive Terrain

S: do you think the resistance comes at the level of negotiating the language of resolutions or do you think there is some openness to putting things in language and then leaving their own resistance for ‘behind closed doors’ – when it comes to putting money behind things?

CM: I think it depends. I feel like I've seen a little bit of everything. I don't actually really know the answer to that question. I feel like generally diplomats – this is a huge generalization – most diplomats I know are not willing to take a fight they know they're going to lose. That means they are not willing to put language in that they know they are going to lose….so for example the 'women human rights defender's resolution that was going through the 3rd Committee last year. [Feminist-friendly Nordic State] was working very closely with feminists to put together the first draft and one of their first drafts had the words 'patriarchy' and 'heteronormativity' and they [the Mission staff] took this out. And I edit this out all the time on stuff that comes out of our office. Because anything that goes to the UN… anything that says patriarchy and heteronormativity is not going to fly at the UN. It’s just not.

S: why?

CM: because they can't hear it……you have to use language that in some way has been vetted, right… that in some way is somewhere in the UN system where they can hear it. 92

To say that we need to account for the practices of the place in which action takes place is, itself, nothing new. But, how in our analysis might we include the account with which I started this chapter and not simply declare this a moment of co-optation from which there is no return, a sign of inevitable failure? How can we understand the prevailing possibilities of language not simply as barriers but as

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92 CM.
creating spaces from which to act? Iver Neumann, a strong proponent of discourse analysis in International Relations, convincingly argues that the turn to discourse analysis must include an analysis of practices – the study of social action itself – if it is to provide a convincing account of social life as a whole.\textsuperscript{93} What is less clear, however, is \textit{how} to incorporate this turn to practice. Neumann’s own surveys of the literature and the later enthusiasm for ‘the practice turn’ in critical IR scholarship more broadly, indicates that there remains much room for exploration of such questions.\textsuperscript{94} I begin here by thinking through the framework of discourse and how we might think of these social practices as discursive.

Laura Shepherd, in her 2008 article, Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, and in her related book-length analysis convincingly argues for “the importance of paying analytical attention to what she terms “the discursive terrain of international institutions when analyzing the formulation and implementation of security policy.”\textsuperscript{95} As Shepherd explains, taking account of this terrain is to take account of the operation of power in that space as productive of:

practices of knowledge (including UNSC Resolutions), conditions of meaning (of those same Resolutions), and identity (as marked and made in the Resolutions, and elsewhere). Ideas about agency (the efficacy of the subject), structural inhibitors of that agency and the construction of the subject itself all emerge in a particular discursive context and are both produced by and productive of practices of power.\textsuperscript{96}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{93} Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy," \textit{Millennium} 31, no. 3 (2002).}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{95} Shepherd, \textit{Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice}.}  
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{96} Shepherd, 514.}
In Shepherd’s Foucauldian analysis, discourses are understood as constructing “objects in certain ways and delimit[ing] the possibilities for action in relation to those objects.”97 The practices of a discourse are then “different ways of structuring areas of knowledge and social practice” that “systematically form the objects of which they speak.”98 Reminiscent of these conceptual grounds described by Foucault, to pay attention to the ‘terrain’ is, as I hear it, to pay attention to something more than the topography of a place – something more than “an accurate and detailed delineation and description” of a locality and its immovable forms (in this case of the Security Council). I hear it and quite quickly conjure its operation in a geological context – terrane – “a name for a connected series, group, or system of rocks or formations; a stratigraphical subdivision.” I can sense in this the somewhat contained quality of the institutional space of the Security Council even as it is contingent. But the term also carries with it an appeal to my Derridean sensibilities: “a fault-bounded area or region with a distinctive stratigraphy, structure, and geological history.”99 To

97 Ibid., 506. In Michel Foucault’s early work, he describes discourse as “a set of statements that are made official or authoritative under the governance of a specific set of rules, proper to a given discipline.” Lisa Downing, *The Cambridge Introduction to Michel Foucault*, Cambridge Introductions to Literature (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 45.


be bounded by a fault – the term in this sense captures something of the ultimate openness of discursive formations even as the layers of historical specificity are apparent. What is to know and trace this terrain so as to understand the space into which feminist interventions emerge? What is it to do so when the object of knowledge is the UN Security Council?

In one sense, the most basic lay of the land in the case of the UN Security Council can be found in its constitutional or foundational text – the UN Charter. It is made up of 15 member states – the five veto-holding permanent members (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) and the ten members chosen by the General Assembly from amongst its elected members, on a two-year staggered rotation and, through a formula that builds in regional representation. The basic decision-making process is also set out in these foundational texts:

Each member-state of the UNSC has one vote. Resolutions of the UNSC are binding under international law; adoption requires nine of the 15 council members vote, or more, and no veto from the five permanent members.

As a body, the Security Council as stated in Article 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, is mandated to act on behalf of all members of the United Nations to “ensure prompt and effective action” with respect to the maintenance of international peace


and security, and shall act in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.”

The willingness of the Council to act on this mandate (and in what circumstances) has shifted over time and in ways integrally connected with the power relationships entrenched in its structure. So, for example, several authors point to the massive increase in Security Council activity following the end of the Cold War as an indicator of its increased general willingness (and ability) to take positive action (rather than acting via omission or the exercise of a veto). The 1990s saw a dramatic increase “in the number of meetings (both formal and informal), agenda items, resolutions, and peacekeeping missions;” the Council has moved “from roughly one decision per month to one per week.” Alongside [the end of the explicit [veto stand-off dynamic] that dominated relations in the Council’s first 40 years, there has been an increasing focus on thematic issues rather than specific conflicts. The adoption of SCR 1325 is seen as a clear result and marker of this change. Of course

102 http://www.un.org/en/sc/about/faq.shtml#function Furthermore, the UNSC has the mandate to request member-states of the UN to use military force, economic sanctions, or other nonviolent methods to stop an aggressor. The UNSC may also recommend new members and advise the General Assembly with regard to the election of a new secretary-general. Ibid.
104 18.
106 Otto.
the meaning of this too shifts in hindsight. Dianne Otto, for example, despite marking
the adoption of 1325 as a clear feminist success, notes that:

1325, like the Security Council’s other thematic resolutions, was an attempt to
arrest its flagging legitimacy at the end of the twentieth century by reassuring
critics that its post-Cold War activism was not motivated solely by self-
interest.\(^{107}\)

The boundaries of this mandate are also articulated through the countries or
issues accepted on the Council’s formal agenda and how these have shifted over time.
These shifts track changes in the relationships at different points in time of the P5 to
one another and to the elected members. But they are also an expression of changes in
the desires and interests of these actors as internally constituted at the national
level.\(^{108}\) The Council’s interpretation of its mandate has simultaneously been shaped
by the relationships of power between these actors and the specific issue, country or
‘situation’ on which they are being asked to act (or refrain from acting) and, the
significance of that relationship to the attainment of their own identities or
interests.\(^{109}\) Wallensteen and Johannson in their review of Security Council decision
making point out that the colonial relationships entrenched in the Council’s structure
play out in the shape of the Council’s agenda. They point out, for example, that the

\(^{107}\) Ibid., 11. As she points out, the resolution does not effectively deal with the structural
causes of inequality, it makes little attempt to really deal with conflict prevention and “makes
no reference to general disarmament, a long-standing goal of women’s peace movements.”
\(^{108}\) Soumita Basu, "Gender as National Interest at the Un Security Council," *International
Affairs* 92, no. 2 (2016). who notes that this is an understudied and undertheorized
perspective on the Council’s WPS policy.
\(^{109}\) For discussion on this changing role see Wallensteen. Also, Kishore Mahbubani, "The
Permanent and Elected Council Members," ibid.. In relation to this point in regard to WPS
policy specifically, see Basu.
Council is “particularly attentive to matters of concern to Europe,” which, they suggest, is unsurprising given that:

conflict regions in Africa, southeastern Europe and the Middle East….are all economically dependent on Europe, linked through colonial and cultural heritage, and geographically close. This closeness combines with the fact that Europe is strongly represented on the Council…(with) six of the Council’s fifteen members (being) directly drawn from European roots.\textsuperscript{110}

Needless to say, the widening of the types of issues that the Security Council has, particularly since the 1990s, recognized as threatening ‘international peace and security,’ has also seen it acting in relation to a range of geopolitically-designated conflicts it would have avoided in the past.\textsuperscript{111} Wallensteen and Johansson take the view, however, that although “[t]here is a tendency [toward] a broadening agenda” – (impliedly a broadening to include so-called ‘soft’ security issues) – “no doubt, …urgent world events may prevent the Council from taking up other challenges” –

\textsuperscript{110} Wallensteen, 21-25. They note that “Three permanent members are European countries, and one, the United States, is dominated by similar perspectives. There are two elected seats for Western Europeans and there is one for Eastern Europe.” Ibid., 25. As Smith explains: “The remaining ten seats are for UN members elected to serve on the Council for staggered two-year terms, with five new members coming on the Council on January 1 of each calendar year. The Charter specifies that these states be selected with ‘due regard being specially paid, in the first instance to the contribution of Members of the United Nations to the maintenance of international peace and security….and also to equitable geographic distribution.’ The result of these provisions is an election process where geography is often the decisive factor and states engage in a campaign of intense jockeying for seats. General Assembly Resolution 1991A, which expanded the size of the Council, [from 11 to 15] also specified that the ten elected seats should be distributed five to Asia and Africa, two to Western Europe and Other, two to Latin America and the Caribbean, and one to Eastern Europe. Informal practice usually distributes the five seats for Asia and Africa as two Asian states, two African states, and one Arab state, but this allocation is subject to significant variation. The Charter’s final requirement for the ten elected seats is that ‘a retiring member shall not be eligible for immediate re-election,’ in order to prevent the dominance of these seats by middle powers to the exclusion of small states, as happened at the League of Nations.” Goldsmith and Posner, 165.

\textsuperscript{111} Wallensteen.
here going on to suggest that states will continue to prioritize those issues and events that fit into a more traditional, “hard security” understanding of the mandate. This seems to be an assessment shared by the WPS advocates I interviewed. There remains a tendency too for themes outside of this hard security framework to be studiously avoided. “There are some thematic areas,” noted HM that “the Council will not touch and may never touch, poverty (how poverty causes conflict and is an international peace and security concern) being one.” CM had a similar view, reflecting: “it is going to take a little while longer before economic, social and cultural issues will be less of a hard sell.”

But what is it to move from this knowledge of the shifting political relationships of and in the Security Council to then articulating how this produces a political space (and the relationships within it)? How too to then think through how these relationships of power shape the possibilities for feminist interventions in and through language? The answers provided by traditional international relations theory to this sort of question have mostly focused on how “various international institutions translate the will and interests of their members into efficient policy formulation.” In doing so, conventional theories have, for the most part, focused on “either structural power dynamics or the importance of individual agency.”

112 Ibid., 29.
113 HM.
114 CM.
115 Shepherd, Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice, 384.
rare, are those analyses that collapse this dichotomy and instead look, as Shepherd does, to “the ways in which institutions are sites of discursive power and both product/productive of particular discourses that in turn constitute particular horizons of possibility.” An analysis through discourse opens space for this and for thinking about what can and cannot be ‘heard’ within this discourse. For example, as Shepherd illustrates in her 2008 analysis, “Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325,”

it is “thinkable” within the discursive terrain of the Security Council, …that consultation with NGOs can lead to better insight and understanding of a given issue. It is not (yet) thinkable that consultation with randomly selected members of the public would have similarly positive results. These “commonsense” notions are constituted by particular configurations of discourse that, as a whole, has specific horizons of possibility, including certain modes of operation and excluding others.

These horizons of possibility and the histories through which they are constituted are marked in the use of specific language in policies and texts related to policymaking efforts and it is these that form the core of Shepherd’s analysis. Her central argument in relation to WPS discourse in the Council, is that the particular conceptions of ‘(international) security’ and ‘gender (violence)’ within SCR 1325 condemn that policy to failure in practice. In UNSCR 1325 and surrounding texts, she identifies:

118 Ibid.
119 Shepherd, "Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325," 5. Also in this vein is a significant body of feminist scholarship in international law and policy that has unpacked contested understandings of such key concepts as ‘security.’ See, for example Tickner; "You Just Don't Understand: Troubled Engagements between Feminists and Ir Theorists," International Studies Quarterly 41, no. 4 (1997);
constructions of gender that assume it largely synonymous with biological sex and, further, reproduce logics of identity that characterized women as fragile, passive and in need of protection and constructions of security that locate the responsibility for providing that protection firmly in the hands of elite political actors in the international system.”

Shepherd argues that the “ideas and ideals about gender, violence and security that were represented in [Resolution 1325]” can “be tracked back to ideas and ideals held in the institutions involved in the crafting of the document.”

Identifying Textual Surfaces

Shepherd explores the concepts she is analysing as they emerge within the discursive terrain – an emergence told through what she terms ‘narratives of production.’ These are read from a range of texts chosen on the basis of their having been “given textual priority in UNSCR 1325 and also because the institutions themselves cite them as fundamental to the production of UNSCR 1325.” These texts, all publicly available in written form, include Reports of the Secretary General to the Security Council on the WPS theme, Chapters II-VII of the UN Charter (1948), and public advocacy materials developed by the NGOWG in the lead up to the adoption of SCR 1325. Shepherd’s historically situated inter-textual reading of this discursive terrain leads her to conclude that:

the frequently unreflective and unconscious ideas that people have are being written into policy documents and are functioning to order and organize those


120 Shepherd, "Sex, Security and Superhero(in)Es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond," 506.
121 Ibid., 506 {Shepherd, 2008 #418.
documents – and those of whom the documents speak – in very specific ways.\(^\text{123}\)

Shepherd’s analysis highlights some entrenched and fundamental obstacles to 1325’s implementation that are produced by this ordering and organization of policy texts.\(^\text{124}\) These are not contained within the bounds of policy on WPS. Rather, as she explains through her analysis, the ordering of these texts also serves to reproduce the state-centred domain:

> The productive power of UNSCR 1325 and associated frameworks for action to discipline political authority reproduces the international as a domain of peace that owns the necessary knowledge to “develop” domestic societies bounded within the confines of the territorial state.\(^\text{125}\)

Shepherd constructs this argument from an intertextual reading of various written documents which she argues are the “product of particular discourses of international security and gender violence that are in contact in UNSCR 1325.”\(^\text{126}\) The Reports to the Security Council on ‘Women, Peace and Security’ issued by the Secretary General (explaining the UN system’s implementation efforts and challenges) are analysed in this way. Missing from Shepherd’s analysis however, is the practices of production that are not captured in this textual sense. Thus, the SG’s reports’ particular form may also be explained in a more immediate and direct sense by such factors as: their being produced by an under-funded section in the UN Secretariat; that they are often written by a junior consultant with little authority in the

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 506.
\(^{124}\) Ibid.
\(^{125}\) Ibid., 399.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., 86.
hierarchical bureaucracy (who is nonetheless expected to elicit inputs from UN operational units that have little time or inclination to contribute to an annual report); that many sections of the report are simply copied and pasted from other documents to save time and research efforts; that Member States may create pressure to reframe particular sections of the reports; or that authors of such UN reports are discouraged by international protocol from singling out particular Member States for criticism.

Similarly, the heading and content of a letter by the NGO Working Group in advance of a Security Council Open Debate is critiqued for treating the words ‘women’ and ‘gender’ interchangeably and assuming the terms to be translatable. Shepherd suggests that using the word ‘gender’ in places where the letter uses ‘women’ would aid a more progressive discourse and ones more likely to address the root causes of gender inequality. However, this level of textual analysis, while purportedly being attentive to the dynamics of power in and between these institutions is unable to reveal, for example, that the word ‘gender’ itself has encountered resistance within this policymaking space. Russia, for example, has from time to time (and off the record) claimed that the word has no cognate in Russian and that they thus prefer to avoid its use. This analysis also cannot speak of the fact that this resistance, in coming from a Permanent Member of the Security Council, is more enduring and consequential than if expressed by a State serving two years as an elected member of the Council. Analysis of these written texts also cannot explain that such letters as that issued by the NGOWG are intended to draw attention to a

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127 Shepherd, Gender, Violence and Security: Discourse as Practice, 142.
particular debate and do so by using the title assigned to it by the Member State by whom it was convened. These texts are unable to, on their own, account for this power being situated in that member’s momentary prerogative as Security Council President – a position rotated monthly and in alphabetic order (of the Member State’s name in the dominant English alphabetic listing). Nor can the analysis explain how that naming is also limited by the name given (and now cemented) to the policy area in question when the Agenda was adopted. These details of practice that lie beyond these obviously ‘significant’ texts may seem minor. However, if the words in a title are taken as indicative of a political position or, as hampering subsequent implementation efforts then these details are consequential and, in that sense, worth knowing.

On the structure of Shepherd’s analysis, the problem is framed as being one of a lack of appropriate or sufficiently ‘feminist’ conceptualizations on the part of those engaging in policy-work – that what is needed is simply to provide them with “the possibility of alternative concepts with which to proceed.”\(^{128}\) It is far from clear, however, that the averred disconnect between feminist conceptualizations and those emerging in policy and policy discourse can be traced to a theoretical or conceptual deficit on the part of those engaged in policymaking. Discourses are not simply ‘sets of ideas’ deployed and then shared by policy communities, politicians or social movements rhetorically and then settled into textual form in policy documents.\(^{129}\)

\(^{128}\) Ibid., 5.
\(^{129}\) Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.
the contrary, I argue, even those fully equipped with the ‘appropriate’ meanings may still face significant challenges in having those meanings adopted in the first place or sustained in the long term.  

This does not necessitate a wholly different framework for analysis, but a thinking through of the concept of discourse with which we work. Although concerned with words and language as mediators of meaning, an analysis of discourse need not be limited to the analysis of speech or text in any conventional sense. Linguistic conventions are imbued with power and authority by factors and conflicts outside of language itself and it is thus essential to think about the social conditions of communication – the hegemonic practices – that are not, per se, linguistic. 

*Discourse as Practice*

What do we miss when we look at the production of meaning through a formal text ultimately taken to represent coherent ideas to which a clearly identified group of political agents have ‘consented’ (even if unconsciously)? As I see it, the limitation to Shepherd’s approach (as valuable as it is to interrogate the potential of policy texts) is related to the practices she reads as meaningful to the enquiry and, to the ‘perspective’ from which she reads (and then tells) the discursive terrain.

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130 This is of course not a problem unique to feminist political projects that pursue this mode of engagement. See Bessis, 634.; Bebbington.  
131 Hunt, 323. Thompson, 9. As such, and as Adler-Nissen has argued, “an internal analysis of political discourses or texts, which does not place them in the political field or wider social frames is of limited value. Rebecca Adler-Nissen, "Introduction," in *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in Ir*, ed. Richard; Neumann Little, Iver B.; Weldes, Jutta, The New International Relations Series (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 6.
In relation to the first of these, it appears in Shepherd’s approach that linguistic practices are located on the inside (as constitutive of discourse), and other practices held separate – if not outside the discourse at the very least not visible. A similar approach is illustrated in the work of Charlotte Epstein who also focuses on conceptual shifts and analyses the production of an international anti-whaling discourse. Epstein’s point of departure is the construction of the ‘anti-whaling’ identity that is so integral to the shift to an anti-whaling order. She argues that this is construed “not simply discursively but through concrete modalities of consumption.” Although, discourses and material practices are “tightly bound up and mutually constitutive,” material practices – such as whaling itself – remain separately significant. The implication of this approach – that society can be “separated into different types of practice on a priori grounds” – is something Laclau and Mouffe reject entirely. They in fact view “as logically self-contradictory all attempts to escape and conceptualize this world from an extra-discursive perspective.”

132 This approach is not an unusual one. Stuart Hall, for example, retains a separation between ideological, sociological, economic and political practices. Stuart Hall, "The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism among the Theorists," in Communications and Culture, ed. Cary; Grossberg Nelson, Lawrence, Communications and Culture (London; Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988). See also Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.

133 Epstein. So, for example, she notes: “Whaling is a very concrete, material practice. It is also the repository of a whole host of meanings pinned upon the whale (for example, as a source of raw material, as a food, or as a fiendish beast) that are reproduced every time a whaling expedition sets out.” Ibid., 5.

134 Ibid.

135 Howarth, 100.

136 Howarth and Stavrakakis, 3. To illustrate the difficulty of retaining an ontological distinction between linguistic and behavioural aspects of practice, Howarth draws on the work of Austin in How to Do Things with Words in which he argued for an understanding of
actions are meaningful and this meaning is socially constituted by “historically specific systems of rules and significant differences [that] ... form the identities of subjects and objects.”¹³⁷ This does not imply a denial of materiality or reduction to idealism or scepticism.¹³⁸ Rather the meaning of any particular object, subject or action is dependent on how its identity and significance is constructed by/within a particular discourse and fixed in a moment in time.

Howarth provides the useful example of a forest through which a new highway is proposed to run. In a discourse of economic modernization the trees may be understood as an obstacle to the rapid implementation of a road system and further economic growth. Within a discourse of environmentalism that same forest might be viewed as a site of scientific interest or intrinsic beauty and symbolic of the nation’s threatened natural heritage. Similarly, acts of sexual violence in conflict might be understood as collateral damage to civilians, the violation of a nation’s honour or the particular linguistic forms as performative – as constituting speech acts. Howarth argues that these performative utterances cannot be distinguished in any sensible way from the material practices to which they are connected. So, saying, “I do,” in the marriage ceremony, is as much an action and part of the practice of getting married as the action of exchanging rings and, both are meaningful within particular discourses of marriage. Howarth, 104. See also J. L. Austin, How to Do Things with Words, ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisà, 2nd ed. (Harvard University Press, 1975).

¹³⁷ Howarth and Stavrakakis, 3-4.
¹³⁸ Laclau and Mouffe. The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/dualism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of ‘natural phenomena’ or ‘expressions of the wrath of God,’ depends upon the structuring of a discursive field. What is denied is not that such objects exist externally to thought, but the rather different assertion that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence. See also Trevor; Hunt Purvis, Alan, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology," The British Journal of Sociology 44, no. 3 (1993).
exercise of an efficient and effective tactic of war. How it is understood in a time or place depends on how it is understood within the prevailing discourse. These discourses simultaneously provide ‘subject positions’ with which social agents can identify – as ‘developers’, ‘naturalists’ or ‘eco-warriors’ in the ‘forest’ discourses or as ‘survivor’ ‘victim’ or ‘protector’ in discourses of sexual violence. It is from these positions, and what they imply, that subjects act and relate to one another.

The political project then is to dominate or structure a field of meaning through articulatory practices that establish a relation among elements and in so doing partially fix the identities of objects and practices.\textsuperscript{139} Particular policy positions that are adopted – say, in a Security Council Resolution – constitute a moment in which a field of meaning has become partially fixed. These “hegemonic forms” are, however, always contingent and historical constructions that cannot completely exhaust a field of meaning.\textsuperscript{140} In part this is a general feature of systems of meaning in a post-structuralist world that are, as Derrida argued, always ultimately contingent. Although discourses might endeavour to impose order and necessity on a field of meaning, that possibility is ultimately precluded.\textsuperscript{141} This does not condemn discourse theory to an entirely fluid play of meaning. On the contrary, partial fixations of meaning are not only possible but also necessary.\textsuperscript{142} Doing away with the discursive/non-discursive

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\textsuperscript{139} Laclau and Mouffe, 113.
\textsuperscript{140} Howarth and Stavrakakis, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{141} See, for example, the arguments on this presented in Jacques Derrida, \textit{Limited Inc}, ed. Gerald Graff, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman Weber and Samuel (Northwestern University Press, 1988).
\textsuperscript{142} Howarth and Stavrakakis, 7.
binary altogether is, they argue, what allows us to think of the discursive as a political
space in a coherent way.143

In the Chapters that follow, I use this undoing of the discursive/non-discursive
binary as an opportunity to explore alternative textual surfaces to understand the
Security Council’s policymaking space. These include in turn: academic critiques of
WPS policy; meeting transcripts of Security Council Open Debates; and transcripts of
my interviews with my feminist interlocutors. Although these too are written texts, I
attempt to read their spaces differently so to make visible the everyday practices of
the Security Council that produce its conditions of possibility (and thus its policy). In
the next section ‘Situating Narratives,’ I use this fluidity to read the ‘place’ of the
Security Council’s WPS policymaking practice as also being produced outside of that
space as it is commonly understood.

While this fluid notion of discourse allows space for reading from elsewhere,
that there is no position outside of discourse from which to read, and no apriori
subjects or objects from which to begin the analysis presents its own challenges. If a
discursive field (such as the Security Council’s WPS policymaking space) is
constituted by its “socially meaningful patterns of action,” how might the practices of
significance be articulated if they cannot be separated from their social context for
analysis?144 As Calhoun and Sennet observe, practices of/in culture, “are socially

143 Howarth.
144 Ibid., 18.
situated, and best grasped relationally. As Adler and Pouliot note in their thinking through the practices of International Diplomacy, “in being performed more or less competently, [these practices] simultaneously embody, act out, and possibly reify background knowledge and discourse in and on the material world.” Such ‘cultural practices’ ‘like craft, or musical performance, … involve embodied learning and sensuous relations to the material world. If we are want to think beyond purely linguistic practices, how can we know and tell of those practices outside of immersive experience? These challenges are ones that, in a post-structuralist account, are impossible to surmount. This is a paradox that, in one way or another, animates the remainder of this text. If, as Derrida, proposes, the ‘real world’ is constituted as a text and “one cannot refer to this “real” except in an interpretive experience,” how might I tell of that place? The practices that matter, the ones that are socially meaningful, appear as such depending on the story I tell, the gap I am attempting to traverse, and the position from which I make the attempt.

Laclau and Mouffe tackle this tension this by introducing the idea of nodal points – privileged signifiers or reference points that bind together and structure elements into a particular system of meaning or chain of signification. Laclau

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147 Calhoun and Sennett, 6.
149 In an example put forward by Žižek, in communist discourse the signifier “communism” is a nodal point around which a number of pre-existing and available signifiers are organized

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developed this idea of nodal points into what he terms ‘empty signifiers.’\textsuperscript{150} These ‘signifiers without a signified’ represent some sort of ‘lack’ or impossible ideal in society that competing social forces then portray themselves as fulfilling.\textsuperscript{151} Although closure is ultimately impossible, the idea of these still function to drive the attempt. As Laclau explains:

\begin{quote}
Societies are thus organized and centred on the basis of such (impossible) ideals. What is necessary for the emergence and function of these ideals is the production of empty signifiers.\textsuperscript{152}
\end{quote}

In the space I have begun to outline here, there are a number of clear nodal points visible in the various WPS Resolutions. As Shepherd demonstrates in her analysis, the concepts of Gender, Security, and the International as they are used in these texts all function as nodes through which the discursive space is organized. In Chapter 5: Subjects of Practice I work with this idea of nodal points as ‘dominant forms’ within the Security Council’s WPS discourse. However, rather than tracing the use of particular Concepts I think through the characteristic of these forms and what makes them amenable to use in counter-hegemonic efforts. I go on to explore the Security

\begin{quote}
and acquire new meaning – so “[d]emocracy acquires the meaning of ‘real’ democracy as opposed to ‘bourgeois’ democracy, freedom acquires an economic connotation and the role and function of the state is transformed.” Howarth and Stavrakakis, 7.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{151} Howarth and Stavrakakis, 8-9. So, for example ‘justice’ is seen to perform the role of empty signifier in Irish Republicanist discourse and ‘gender equality’ could be seen to fulfill a similar role in feminist discourse at the United Nations. Anthony M. Clohesy, "Provisionalism and the (Im)Possibility of Justice in Northern Ireland," ibid.
\textsuperscript{152} David R. Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis," ibid., 8-9.
Council’s annual WPS Open Debate as a place of practice into which the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict emerges.

In this framework, rather than being the “starting point of politics,” identity is something that is “constructed, maintained or transformed in and through political struggles.” The Woman-in-Conflict is deployed in an effort to shift the hegemonic practices of the Council even as she is produced by them. Individuals may have several ‘subject positions’ with which they can identify, and these may be occupied simultaneously. A particular actor may identify with the subject positions ‘woman’, ‘peace-activist’, ‘feminist’ and ‘UN security-policy analyst’ or some combination thereof. Whether or not she can act on any (or all) of these depends on “the availability of these subject positions, a point around which [they] can be articulated, and the existence of sustaining practices. The way in which she is able to act constitutes, for Laclau, her ‘political subjectivity.’ A particular discourse may be constructed so as to offer this opportunity to make sense of and act from a multiplicity of subject positions. Of course the discourses that confer identity on subjects are only contingent and may ‘fail’ but these dislocations too can be

\[\text{\textsuperscript{153} Torfing, 82. The open nature of these social antagonisms allows Laclau and Mouffe to reject Althusser’s determinist and reductionist account, even as they endorse his claim that subjects are discursively constructed through ideological practices. Howarth, 108.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{154} Laclau and Mouffe, 115.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{155} Howarth, 108.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{156} Stuart Hall, for example, demonstrates how the construction of a Thatcherist discourse involved the articulation of a number of disparate ideological elements and identities that only made sense together or could only be reconciled by accepting the Thatcherist position. Hall. These included “traditional Tory values about law and order, ‘Englishness’, the family, tradition and patriotism, on the one hand and classical liberal ideas about the free market and homo economicus on the other.” See also Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.}\]
productive and force subjects to make decisions and identify with particular political projects.\(^{157}\)

The construction of discourses involves the exercise of power in the exclusion of other possibilities, the structuring of relations between social agents and the drawing of political frontiers between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders.’ Essentially, discourse requires an “outside” against which to constitute itself and remains vulnerable “to those political forces excluded in [its] production, as well as the dislocatory effects of [uncontrollable] events.”\(^{158}\) This is no less the case in relation to discursive practices produced outside of the formal places of politics.

Politics is produced when societal conflicts or social antagonisms expose this vulnerability or ‘discursive exterior’ or limit of a discourse. These ‘productive’ social antagonisms are not the class antagonisms of classical Marxism, and the identities and interests of the social agents involved are neither determined nor fully constituted.\(^{159}\) On the contrary, these antagonisms occur “because social agents are unable to attain their identities (and therefore their interests), and because they

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\(^{157}\) Yannis Stavrakakis provides a useful example of the effect of dislocation of discourse in relating the emergence of green ideology out of the dislocation of left discourses in the late 1960s and the rearticulation of the radical tradition around ‘nature’. Yannis Stavrakakis, "On the Emergence of Green Ideology: The Dislocation Factor in Green Politics," ibid. “The crisis of the left creates a lack of meaning and a need for rearticulation of the radical tradition. One of the dominant versions of this rearticulation took place around the nodal point ‘nature’ which during the same period – and due to the severity of the environmental crisis – emerged as the point de caption of a newly emerging paradigm regulating the relation between humans and their environment.” David R. Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis, "Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis," ibid., 13-14.

\(^{158}\) Howarth, 103; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.

\(^{159}\) Laclau and Mouffè, 125.
construct an ‘enemy’ who is deemed responsible for this ‘failure.’” These moments of failure, negativity or lack threaten an existing discourse by revealing its limits. However, social agents are also able to use such moments to construct particular chains of meaning to construct political frontiers and to attempt to expand or constitute hegemonic discourses.

In the Chapter 4: Troubling Narratives: Locating Failure I explore this productive possibility by revisiting a dislocation within my own identity – that produced in my encounters with various critiques of the Council’s WPS policy. I then revisit a particular ‘narrative of failure’ and suggest in my reading thereof that the way in which we account for the failures to produce desired feminist meanings produces various feminist objects/subjects who carry this failure and whose potential for future feminist intervention is occluded. My move to that textual space is preceded, however, by situating it through a reading of the practices of the place in which it is produced.

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160 Ibid.; Howarth, 103.
161 Torfing, 82.
In many respects, the Security Council’s WPS agenda has cemented the idea that securing international peace relies on military strength and securitized states. Feminist aspirations for permanent peace have been reduced to seeking women’s participation in the decision-making structures of the existing frames of war, supporting disarmament only at the local level in post-conflict communities, and urging legal and practical reforms aimed at making armed conflict safer for women.162

Thus begins the concluding section of the recently published, “Women, Peace and Security: A critical analysis of the Security Council’s Vision.”163 I habitually begin my reading of books and articles by glancing over author titles and biographies, but far more fascinating for me are the ‘acknowledgements.’ Even if their extent is curtailed by House Styles and publisher guidelines (or required by obligation), they provoke my curiosity. I enjoy the clues they scatter of intellectual affinities, debts of gratitude and the reminders of the communal nature of so many research and writing practices. Sometimes they give a sense of where the author or the publication “fits” in the world of scholarly (or other?) interventions. And so my eyes were drawn to the narrow shaded text block, printed on the bottom of the last page of the PDF I downloaded:


163 Ibid. Otto is, as footnoted: Francine V McNiff Professor of Human Rights Law, Director of the Institute for International Law and the Humanities (IIAH), Melbourne Law School, Australia.
her superbly helpful research assistance, well beyond what might ordinarily be expected.  

I am distracted for a moment by trying to figure out the release date of the promised *Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict* (updated with new editors?) and find instead that the esteemed publisher also (instead?) seems to be planning a *Handbook of Women, Peace and Security* featuring: “analysis from leading scholars, advocates and practitioners from around the world.” Oxford has summoned an impressive collective; institutional titles of role and rank implying engagement and experience in the creation and monitoring of policy documents and in their articulation (implementation?) in recognized places of war. I’m not sure how many of the authors situate themselves in, or are ‘from,’ those places. There seem a few whom, by my own stereotyped reading of Names are not White and from the USA, Western European or the southern reaches of the former British Empire. There is one who is not female-identified. Most of the names I recognize are living heterosexual lives, but not all. I’ve met/encountered/befriended several through collaborative work in New York, and I can easily place several others. Most have some significant experience working for, or in relation to, the United Nations – within its institutional structures or as intricately connected outsiders in International NGOs. Most have research-focused

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164 Leaving me curious as to which of the bits to which I am reacting are the result of research/writing decisions of said named research assistance. What usually follows in book acknowledgements is the other side of that relationship – that, as one is taking authorial credit for labour of another, responsibility for all mistakes etc. etc. are the author’s own.
165 I recognize most of the names and have had the opportunity to meet or work with several. One I see is now located at my home university and I make a mental note to stop by when I’m next visiting my family.
roles. Its lead author (thankfully) a well-respected and still-trusted feminist with experience leading and navigating politically fraught multilateral processes. Included as contributors, and beyond the role of editor (intellectual overseer?), are those situated in academia – names which tell of decades of influential feminist scholarship that has variously advocated for, analysed, and critiqued, feminist interventions in international law and politics.

This particular pantheon of WPS experts contains (almost) none of those names over whose appearance I might exchange a groan with old colleagues – names I recognize (after more than a decade occupied in and with this field of knowledge/area of expertise/place of practice) as almost knee-jerk inclusions.\footnote{166} Whether or not they have a particularly insightful/new/useful/critical intellectual contribution, they bear a name that commands attention or have the institutional position, ties or resources illustrious enough to be conveyed as, in this case, ‘Oxford Handbook-worthy’ knowledge.\footnote{167} Perhaps, on reflection, readers would recognize


\footnote{167} The Handbook will feature analysis from leading scholars, advocates and practitioners from around the world including, amongst others, Radhika Coommaswary, lead author of Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000); Swanee Hunt, former US Ambassador and Founder of the Institute of Inclusive Security; Rashida Manjoo, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences and Professor in Department of Public Law, University of Cape Town; Christine Chinkin, Director of the Centre on Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science; Louise Olsson, Head of Research and Policy, UNSCR 1325 Program, Folke Bernadotte Academy; Karin Landgren, George Soros Visiting Practitioner Chair, Central European University and former UN SRSG UNMIL; Henri Myrtil, Head of Gender and Peacebuilding, International Alert; Shahrashoub Razavi, Chief Research and Data Section, UN Women; Madeleine Rees, Secretary-General of Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and J. Ann Tickner, Professor Emerita in the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California;
such characters in their own spaces: occupying the mantel of expert with a frequency
and enthusiasm that provokes the aforementioned quiet groans from fellow
inhabitants of the field. Perhaps I am particularly attuned to their presence in mine.

The centrality of the UN as an institution seems to make certain
assemblages/expressions of recognized expertise and knowledge more likely – within
that space hierarchies and protocols really matter to which individuals can (and do)
speak and, in what forms. Surely too the [organizing and authorizing] power of a
publisher like Oxford (and the pressures of its imagined
Readership/Reputation/Market) demands certain criteria be met? And what of the
criteria by which we decide to include the texts produced by these gatherings in our
Syllabi, Libraries and Recommended Resource Lists? I imagine the dynamics and
politics of knowledge production and representation that I begin to trace here in the
WPS space may ring a familiar note for others – even those quite differently situated
than I in relation to this particular field:// A story of Proper Names (re)instantiating
their authority and then retreating to the shadows of subtext?\footnote{168}

Places of Production

is a pre-production version of a chapter forthcoming in Fionnuala Ni Aolain,
Dina Francesca Hayes and Nahla Valji (eds.) Oxford Handbook of Gender
and Conflict (Oxford: Oxford University Press). Thanks to Candice Parr for
her superbly helpful research assistance, well beyond what might ordinarily be
expected.

\footnote{168} I was excited to discover the esteemed series is releasing a \textit{Handbook of Women, Peace
and Security} with chapters contributed by impressive contributors – with the usual scattering
of people who, after 10 years in this field, have are always asked to contribute because they
occupy a place in the pantheon of WPS experts.
The moment of placement that situates this particular “critical analysis of the Security Council’s Vision,” is drawn together in the space of a text box with the following: an explanation of the Working Paper Series, “an outlet for research findings, position papers and policy briefs;” names of the members of its editorial board, “Dr Paul Kirby and Associate Professor Laura J. Shepherd;” design credit, the bureaucratically named “LSE designunit (one word? absent space?);” and, in one efficient, yet penultimate, line of text, the name and location of the publication’s sponsoring institution – “Centre for Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE.” If you don’t happen to find yourself in the neighbourhood, can’t afford to travel or, are unlikely to get a visa, there is, in larger, yet still tastefully-sized, font, an alternate set of portals/communicators/locator-devices:

lse.ac.uk/wps  blogs.lse.ac.uk/wps  @LSW WPS

….a vast, complex social system, an institution, referenced, reduced, captured, reproduced & deployed & in the repeated refrain of the 3-letter set…. LSE WPS. It doesn’t roll easily off the tongue, but it doesn’t need to, at least not in its entirety. Those in “LSE design unit” are likely quite happy to be working with the wealth of meaning, history and authority visually glowing in the first three letters L. S. E.

…..el, ess, eee ….heard in a flash in urls, sub-directories and user handles,
contemporary and direct, ‘white on red’ in a trademark-protected square.\textsuperscript{169} I imagine that most academics will, like me, never see the inside of its offices or lecture halls, will probably never have any idea of where the postal code WC2A 2AE places you in relation to London-in-Time or to the Thames, or where the best coffee (or tea?) can be found on campus – although Google and its maps will give a pretty good idea of all of these.\textsuperscript{170} The relevance of these details is hard to pin down and yet they are all part of the institutional force field that is the LSE.

That name, and indeed that postal code, are signifiers from which one can trace many entwined histories and shifting geopolitical formations, none untouched by the power of the State that produced and holds its legal form. Stepping into its online space one can feel the ‘cutting edge.’ It really is quite awe-inspiring when one


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The correct title of the School is either LSE or The London School of Economics and Political Science. London School of Economics should not be used on its own as it does not reflect the breadth of the School's work and contributes to the view that LSE is only concerned with economics.” The logo is the School's main marketing and publicity symbol. Its use is controlled by the External Relations Division (specifically, Communications) and it can only be used by LSE staff. Occasionally permission is given by the Director of External Relations for other organisations to use the logo. It must never be reset, redrawn or altered and there are rules regarding minimum size and clear space around it.” I imagine departmental policy documents, annual reports, job descriptions and meeting notes that speak of cultivating an ‘online presence’ and engagements in/through ‘social media’ platforms. Perhaps there are guidelines for staff – divided into categories as blunt as ‘academic/administrative or other’ – on how individuals are expected to conduct themselves in those spaces. Perhaps that behaviour/conduct can be thought of as separated into moments of individual activity as being enacted in a ‘personal’ or ‘institutional’ capacity – as if a naming can prevent the crossovers. But, if one’s practices speak the name LSE there are likely expectations.

takes in the specific thinkers, ideas, projects, commitments and resources that are organized through the LSE name. The Centre for Women, Peace and Security too is impressive in its own terms – even if a relative newcomer to the array of institutions (now extensive) that have taken Women, Peace and Security as an organizing theme. But would these leading thinkers, scholars, practitioners, and policymakers appear in its spaces if not supported, harnessed and driven by the LSE name, reputation and vast resources? Not that it is an easy one-way or simple hierarchical relationship. After all, according to the explanation-of-self text marked, ‘About’: “The creation of the centre in the Institute of Global Affairs demonstrates the international reach of LSE and its focus on issues of global concern.”\textsuperscript{171} Reverberating through this anointment of WPS as an issue of ‘global concern’ is the LSE name. A name of pedigree, exceptional scholarship, contemporary policy relevance and massive organizing power. It is one to take seriously, and to trust to produce exciting, relevant and innovative scholarship. It is likely the name that brought most readers to the Working Paper with which I began, and to which I’ve promised to return. But, there is also in that name, in the pull of the LSE (origin point – the inner-circles of elite late 19\textsuperscript{th} century London), less comfortable whispers of British Empire, colonial ‘quests’ for enlightenment and the ongoing dominance of knowledge production by those located in the prestigious academic institutions of the Global North. As a white graduate student from the outreaches of British Empire,

\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
studying at a US university, (and recently invited to submit a piece to the Working Paper Series) I too am implicated.

These stories can be, and are, told. There is, in the space of the LSE alone, no doubt a wealth of post-colonial scholarship in which one can catch sight of colonial violence and its reverberations in education, scholarship and pedagogy. The LSE’s Featured News on this random day of writing, (ironically?) telling its own story: “Britain’s professions ‘dominated by those from privileged backgrounds.’ And below the line, the revealing shocker: “New Research unearths a previously unrecognized ‘class pay gap.’” These are not stories for which I have details on hand and, although I reflect on my responsibility here, I am not able to give a full account and find mostly questions. How do these histories leave their trace as we read and write, how do they shape what we read and write? How do we situate ourselves in these complex relationships even as we speak of other things – our topic/scholarship/area of expertise? How do we account for our own position in the complex political economies and hegemonic forms of institutions, even as we read critical analyses of the policy created in others?
Chapter 4: Troubling Narratives: Locating Failure

*Staying with Discomfort*

The real discomfort of being reflexive, Enloe warns, “comes when trying to draw the line between reflexive candor and unwitting self-absorption.”\(^{172}\) This has certainly been the case here.

I have, over the course of this project, realized that those critiques of particular interest to me, and those to which my attention is directed here, were those that, at least on my reading, characterized failures in the Security Council’s WPS policy, or of the WPS Agenda (the distinction sometimes blurs), as being somehow also feminist failures. In a general sense these are failures to produce, and to sustain over time, feminist ideas or meanings of/in the language of WPS policy discourse. There are several crude assumptions underlying my characterization of a failure in policy as not meeting feminist goals/ideals/meanings. The claim to some singular ‘feminist project’ whose predetermined goals are not met within current policy is one that begs interrogation. But as I have begun to recognize, and as is essential if one is attempting to think through discourse, the feminist ‘project’ for which any of us work is deeply connected to the question of how we might read, understand and articulate the ‘failures’ that we produce as feminists (or otherwise).

How feminists writing from academic spaces situate their critiques matters – we cannot be outside of the discourse in which we participate. The ground upon

\(^{172}\) Enloe.
which an appropriate feminism is contested and, as Maria Stern and Marysia Zalewski discuss in “Feminist fatigue(s): reflections on feminism,” we produce the feminism of which we speak.\textsuperscript{173} Claire Hemmings too argues that the political grammar of the stories we tell about feminism – in that case “about Western feminist theory’s recent past” – makes them more or less amenable to adoption for purposes antithetical to feminism’s political project.\textsuperscript{174} She thus seeks to intervene in stories so as to “realign their political grammar to allow a different vision of a feminist past, present, and future.”\textsuperscript{175} For me this intervention required returning to narratives of WPS policy and exploring how they locate and produce particular sites of failure. But it also involved embracing these failures they produce as both inevitable and, as Stern and Zalewski suggest, as productive of alternate narratives. A colleague with whom I recently participated in a Roundtable at the 2017 Annual Conference of the International Studies Association, spoke of how, in her work in refugee camps as representative of a humanitarian agency, failure was accepted as inevitable. Contrary to the implications she read in many academia-situated feminist critiques, she did not hold some naive idea that any of the interventions she was involved in were ‘enough’ or not fraught with ethical dilemmas, nor did she suffer illusions that there wasn’t always some better way to do things. Rather, as we discussed then, to fail was par for the course. It was what we did with that failure that mattered.

\textsuperscript{173} Stern and Zalewski.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid.
Critique is an important tactic of feminist policy advocacy and, accounts of ‘policy failures’ are common starting points. These failures are what motivate so many efforts to persuade others to respond, to make decisions, to take actions and, perhaps most critically, to shift material resources in specific ways and to specific places and people. The marking of a policy’s failings appeals as a tactic that signals dissatisfaction but also marks the source of that dissatisfaction – in the case of much feminist activism at the UN Security Council, it is dissatisfaction with governments who have failed to direct resources towards supporting gender equality and addressing the needs of women. But as often as not it is also dissatisfaction with something more abstract – dissatisfaction with the approach or coverage of policies, with what they more generally allow or refuse, with which lives they recognize and protect and which they do not.

The marking of failure in such an environment is not intended as mere complaint but is an attempt to open space for, if not provoke, future actions. It grounds arguments to persuade those implicated (in the failure as identified) to accept that responsibility and, furthermore, to engage in remedial action. In critiques of policy failures that actor is, most often, a state actor – even if sometimes mediated through intergovernmental forms such as the UN. Most NGO or ‘think-tank’ type policy critiques take such an approach. Reporting in the style of Human Rights Watch or Amnesty International, for example, is well known for identifying institutional actors thought responsible and/or able to initiate change and, for then providing
concrete recommendations tailored to their institutional mandates and influence.\textsuperscript{176} To do otherwise would seem somewhat pointless in the environments in which those reports are intended to circulate and provoke. Beyond their usefulness in persuasive rhetoric, however, evaluations of the extent to which policy changes ‘in fact’ shift material conditions, and in what way, may also be essential to engaging in ethical and responsive policy advocacy. Perhaps the same can be said for policy critiques produced in/for academia – that they mark failure in order to provoke remedial action.\textsuperscript{177} There seems little in the activities of scholarship that demands remedial intent as such – although the neo-liberal form of the academic institutions in which most scholars are located makes this far less likely to be true than it once was.\textsuperscript{178}

\textit{Returning to Disjuncture}

Like many feminist narratives, this one begins by explicitly situating the author in relation to other subjects and in relation to a particular time and place:

It was January 2009 and I was sitting in the crowded office of the International Women’s Tribune Centre (‘IWTC’) in New York, its wide windows framing the United Nations Secretariat Building on the East River with its skirt of national flags, slowly absorbing the sense of accomplishment that was in the room.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{176} HRW.
\textsuperscript{177} This question of course wanders into the much chartered (and yet uncertain) territory of the relationship(s) between scholarship and social change. The academic debates in this area no doubt inform my work but my sense of these relationships is also one shaped/mediated by my prior experience in navigating a somewhat different set of relationships.
\textsuperscript{178} No doubt different disciplines, departments, and individuals vary in their views on the desirability (or appropriateness) of scholarship that includes such proscription It is, however fairly common for critical feminist scholarship to acknowledge its place in provoking social change and, for example, for scholars to critique policies in order to advocate that they be different in some way.
In the opening paragraph of the analysis we join the author in the offices of an international NGO in New York amongst, but somehow separate from, those crowded inside and feeling that sense of accomplishment. The view from the ‘wide-windows’ situates this meeting in close relation to the United Nations and is, perhaps, a comment on the grandeur of the accommodations (are these not suitable for an NGO?). I remember the impressive view from those windows – five floors above and looking across 1\textsuperscript{st} Avenue to the Secretariat building – 40 stories of shimmering and rippling blue-green that would blaze orange and red in the reflected sun of the late afternoon. How NGOs like IWTC came to occupy this prime New York real estate that is the known as the Church Centre on 44\textsuperscript{th} Street (777 UN Plaza) is a fascinating story (for another time).\textsuperscript{180} Suffice it to say that the building’s nine stories of offices and meeting rooms have, at a very conservative guess, hosted several hundred such crowded gatherings over the years. For WPS advocates, these would include the many NGO-sponsored speaker panels, roundtables and information sessions scheduled to coincide with UN meetings (such as the annual Commission on the

\textsuperscript{180} See Sue C. Johnson, "Church Center for the United Nations," \textit{Response: the magazine of women in mission}, no. May (1995), https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/church-center-for-the-united-nations. for a history of this building: “The 12-story Church Center for the United Nations is owned by the Women's Division. It houses Women's Division and United Methodist Board of Church and Society U.N. offices. Also in the building are other denominations' U.N. offices and offices of non-profit organizations that relate to the United Nations.” My office, much smaller and sublet from the US fiscal sponsor for WILPF – the Jane Addams Peace Association – was located on the sixth floor of the CCUN – next door to Amnesty International’s UN office. The IWTC side of the building really did have spectacular views and, in standard NY real estate terms, views way beyond the budget of most NGOs.
Status of Women) or arranged to mark significant UN Events – the 5th, 10th, 15th (insert a multiple of 5) anniversaries of major laws or policies (Beijing plus 5, Rio plus 10).\textsuperscript{181} Given the timing and subject of this meeting it may well have been one organized by IWTC ahead of the tenth Anniversary of SCR 1325 (perhaps to facilitate civil society input into the UN’s 2010 Global Study on WPS). The IWTC – whose Director begins this story, is initially only visible in the author’s careful footnote:

The International Women’s Tribune Centre is an international non-governmental organisation established in 1976, following the United Nations’ First World conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975. It aims to increase women’s access to resources and information, and their ability to realize their rights, by supporting women’s organisations and community groups working to improve the lives of poor women in the global south. According to its website, the IWTC is ‘one of the largest of the women’s international networks’ with a constituency that ‘exceeds 25,000 in 150 countries, 94% in the Global South.’\textsuperscript{182}

That the description of this immense social formation is relegated to a footnote feels somewhat familiar – not that I think it should be the case. I recognize, however, that these vast networks of women and of feminists (particularly in the global south) are seldom reflected in any detail in policy narratives. Their existence is often assumed background to the texts produced for WPS advocacy at the Security Council or referenced in passing in order to show popular support for a position. But of course, this is not the immediate story here, nor how it begins. Rather it is prefaced with a quote and it is with this that I want to begin (again):

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid.
But the Security Council is the most powerful body in the UN’, the Director of the International Women’s Tribune Centre in New York said, looking at me as though I was completely out of touch. ‘It’s resolutions [on women] are surely binding.’

In an immediate sense this situates the author directly in the text as someone in relationship with her interlocutor – the ‘Director of the International Women’s Tribune Centre in New York’ and, by extension, in relationship with the vast networks that the IWTC represents (although this marker of authority follows later in the aforementioned footnote). A beginning likely intended to mark the immediacy, relevance and authenticity of the author’s contributions and to signal the content of the exchange that follows. But this opening does something more. The cited fragment is clearly a response to something prior. In beginning in this way, the author asks to imagine (and accept) as the conversation’s premise, the absent words: ‘the Security Council’s resolutions on women are not binding.’

This is the sentiment in which the author anchors her analysis: “The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade.” As a stylistic choice it works well to unsettle the assumed stability of these vaguely referenced resolutions (and possibly of International Law more broadly). However, it is also a beginning that, given the confidence of the assertion, brings into question using these resolutions as a position from which to articulate

183 Ibid.
184 "The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade," 1.
185 Ibid.
feminist desires for peace and security. This is not the first time I have seen a feminist claim that Security Council Resolutions do not constitute law in a ‘proper’ sense. I am not immediately concerned with confronting this claim. The confidence with which it is made belies the complexities of long-running debates – in scholarship and within political institutions like the UN – on the nature of International Law and on how we might think of it as enforceable.186 But I am interested in the choice to begin with this claim and the implications of that for our understanding of this space and how knowledge of and in that space is produced.

In this case, how does this beginning structure our understanding of Security Council’s policy architecture? This narrative beginning subtly sets up relations and hierarchies inside and in relation to the Security Council. Indeed the Council is articulated as “the most powerful body in the UN” and that position becomes central to the narrative that Otto builds. In addition, Otto’s narrative structures relationships between feminists who occupy this advocacy space and those located elsewhere. In producing these relationships between differently located feminists, how are we (and they), positioned in relation to the Security Council and its policies?

Here it is the Director of an International NGO who is first situated and, who is placed in opposition to the narrator as a subject whose knowledge has somehow

failed. However, despite the incredulous tone and the look that judges her, at least in the author’s estimation, as ‘completely out of touch,’ it is the author’s unspoken and unchallenged claim about law that initiates the narrative. It is the author, whose credentials are situated in the footnotes (‘Professor of Law, Melbourne Law School, The University of Melbourne) who quickly reinforces her position in this knowledge hierarchy when, returning to the crowded room, she:

set about explaining the difference between resolutions of the Security Council that are adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, and those that are not (only the former are legally binding). 187

There is much to be said for the claim that those who consider themselves to be doing WPS advocacy should have a sense of the enforceability of the Security Council’s WPS resolutions – these are, after all, claimed time and again as the framework or source of State and UN obligations in relation to women in conflict settings. Not having been adopted under Chapter VII and under the Council’s power to “use force,” Resolution 1325, it is implied, is not legally binding. This is a very legalistic and formalistic approach to the nature of international law. I’m not sure it takes into account what we mean when we say, as did the Director of the IWTC, that the Council’s resolutions are “binding” and whether we really limit that idea to the capacity to literally use force to compel compliance. Perhaps this was part of the conversation in the room but it is not apparent here. To limit to Council’s Chapter VII resolutions those we consider in law as ‘binding’ does little to account for how the

Security Council’s resolutions function as internal institutional policy directives nor for how the practice of international law – particularly within its institutions – emerges. It is indeed curious that someone who is simultaneously advocating for a more radical feminist position would insist on such a legalistic and formalistic view of international law such as to insist, on “the non-binding character of the resolutions.” Indeed separating formal ‘law’ from something separate called ‘politics’ seems to run counter to much feminist legal scholarship. What is interesting to me in the present enquiry is how the question of whether or not Security Council resolutions [on women] are binding is simultaneously set up as a view around which other boundaries are constructed and differently located feminist subjects are produced.

Feminist Boundaries

In this account, a first boundary is drawn between the author who insists on “the non-binding character of the resolutions,” and those unspecified others in the ‘crowded office’ to whom, “it soon became clear, the distinction did not really matter.” Even as she casts doubt on the intentionality of doing so, Otto casts herself in a privileged position in the debate she sets up:

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188 See for example Sally Engle Merry, *Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). on how UN-generated policies on violence against women are translated into local contexts.

189 Otto, "The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade," 2.
Why was I championing the power of formal ‘law’ over that of ‘politics’? Was I engaging the ‘politics of expertise’ because it gave me, as an international lawyer, a privileged position in the debate? 190

Engaging in the ‘politics of expertise,’ while simultaneously situating this as a question of international law and delimiting the author’s own expertise as relevant, Otto clearly produces and situates herself in her identity as “an international lawyer” as being in “a privileged position in the debate.” 191 Although the reasons given for these divergent views is not explicated in the text, Otto’s intimates her view that this difference is borne of the fact that:

The IWTC’s strategies to promote women’s equality and rights had followed the power …[and lent] feminist support to the hegemonic power of the increasingly emboldened Security Council. 192

Here, as in other accounts, Otto begins by acknowledging the success signalled by the adoption of SCR 1325, characterized here as the “entry of feminist ideas into the sphere of influence of the Security Council” 193 The resolution’s adoption is seen as the result of feminist efforts “to utilise international law to promote and protect women’s rights and gender equality, and to secure peace.” 194 However, in this and similar accounts the adoption of law or institutional policy is, simultaneously, marked as the beginning of the inevitable failure of the interventions that provoked it. As Otto argues here,

190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
192 Ibid., 1-2.
193 Ibid., 2.
194 Ibid.
[while] there is much to celebrate about the Security Council’s WPS agenda in terms of policy and institutional developments, admission into the inner sanctum of the Security Council’s work has come at some cost to feminist goals.\textsuperscript{195}

The price, as Otto sees it for the “Council’s endorsement of women’s participation in peacemaking and peace-building, and its increased accessibility to the NGO Working Group, is the silencing of feminist critiques of militarism and the failure to recognise the ‘inextricable’ link between gender equality and peace.”\textsuperscript{196}

The question for feminists is whether this price of admission is too high, or whether the political significance that attaches to a Security Council resolution – described in a report commissioned by UNIFEM as giving a new ‘political legitimacy’ to women’s peace activism – was worth the price.\textsuperscript{197}

I am interested in how this price is calculated. Because the resolution does not mention it, have feminist critiques been ‘silenced’? Yes, the route to peace and ending war suggested by SCR 1325 is integration of women and a gender perspective, but that does not mean that advocacy for disarmament or the reduction of obscene levels of military spending are terminally silenced – as this phrasing suggests. How are we both simultaneously constructed as a collective Feminist Subject who is responsible for the successful ‘entry of feminist ideas’ and then simultaneously divided into those whose feminist subjectivity remains intact? Somehow when we move into the mode of critique of what has been achieved through feminist interventions, monolithic subjects appear. Is it useful to have a singular subject who

\textsuperscript{195}“Wps: A Critical Analysis of the Security Council’s Vision”.
\textsuperscript{196}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{197}Ibid., 12.
we are satisfied to see fail because as readers we are situated outside with the author? Does being situated and working to directly intervene in Council policy irredeemably taint or corrupt the bodies through such entry has taken place? And where are those writing from academic institutions situated in this text? Which subjects are articulated on which side of a divide has consequences for how we imagine feminism might work to open and shift political space and material circumstance. In the section that follows, I return to the accusation of failure in Otto’s narrative and work through the relationships and subjects it constructs.

**Suspicious Objects (& their Failed Subjects)**

One cost has been a softening of feminist opposition to war, evidenced by a shift in the focus of feminist peace advocates from strengthening the laws that make armed conflict illegal (jus ad bellum) to seeking to humanize the laws that govern the conduct of armed conflict (ius in bello); from aiming to end all wars to making wars safer for women.198

I found the above collected in my notes under the heading, ‘Failed Feminists.’ I return to other textual scraps gathered there but I couldn’t stop thinking of this one. It isn’t the first such portrayal that I encountered in scholarly analyses of the Security Council’s resolutions on Women, Peace and Security – or, as they are otherwise framed, the WPS Agenda, or, as in this extract, the ‘Security Council’s Vision.’ I have encountered many like it. This one appeared toward the end of 2016 in the first

198 Ibid., 1.
paper of the LSE’s newly established series of Women, Peace and Security Working Papers. Maybe the place of its publication had something to do with my paying it so much attention. Perhaps it was a sense that this particular framing presented such a neat and compact version of a narrative thread I’d seen emerge across various feminist analyses of WPS policy. Perhaps it was that I found this particularly irksome at some more personal level.

…..a softening of feminist opposition to war

This is a profound cost indeed, for those opposed to war. I like to think of myself as a feminist in opposition to war. That opposition only hardened in the time I spent working within the advocacy space of the Security Council, but perhaps that’s beside the point. What does it mean to say there has been “a softening of feminist opposition to war?” Is it that fewer feminists are opposing war? Or, is it that opposition by feminists to war is being enacted in less vigorous ways? Is this in reference to specific feminists who are not sufficiently opposing war? Who exactly are those feminists in this context? Is being opposed to war essential to being a feminist? And what counts as opposition anyway? It is a tricky thing this, wondering about feminist opposition to war – and that’s before we’ve come to even consider the evidence of its softening.

What then is the basis for this evaluation of (particular?) feminists and their intentions in relation to war? It is easy to gloss over that detail – the exact location of the failure. It is far easier to simply remain on the side of the accusation: a “softening
of feminist opposition to war.” But its location is not inconsequential. In the narrative here, the failure (the softening of feminist opposition to war) is evidenced by:

a shift in the focus of feminist peace advocates from strengthening the laws that make armed conflict illegal (ius ad bellum) to seeking to humanize the laws that govern the conduct of armed conflict (ius in bello).199

I’m not convinced of the division between these efforts: does showing the brutality of war and attempting to mitigate the worst of its effects not make a case for “strengthening the laws that make armed conflict illegal?” Here, the author implies by the semi-colon, the failure – the softening of feminist opposition to war – results because the focus of feminist peace advocates has shifted “from aiming to end all wars to making wars safer for women.”200

….from aiming to end all wars to making wars safer for women.”

The author of the LSE Working Paper picks up and repeats this narrative refrain as expressing the ‘original’ intent of 1325’s drafters to “strengthen the laws that make armed conflict illegal” and (it is implied) to “end all wars.” It is here that I find resonance. An end to all wars is a desire I share. And yet, I am alienated by the narrative to which this claim is a cap: that attempts to “humanize the laws that govern the conduct of armed conflict” provide evidence of a “softening of feminist opposition to war.”201

The line of argument reflected in the extract – that promoting or participating in the development of international humanitarian law entrenches the war system – is not unfamiliar. It is one with which I grappled when still working in

199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid.
the WPS policy community at the UN. It is one that I think feminists should grapple with if they are to work in, or in relation to, institutions that are so obviously dominated by the logics of war and capital. To not engage in this reflection seems to me itself a political stance – but one quite different in its attitude to the dilemma. To do so in this instance required tracing a path back to the source of the fissure – here the allegation that “the focus of feminist peace advocates has shifted “from aiming to end all wars to making wars safer for women.”

**Making Wars Safer for Women**

What does it mean to be “making wars safer for women?” I’m not sure war is ever safe for anybody, at least not in the long term. But what is it to be concerned with “making wars safer”? And who determines it is safer? And why the focus on women? And which women and which wars? There are many possibilities in this phrase. But it carries a very particular meaning in this WPS context. Here the accusation has become attached to what I have begun to think of as the ‘suspicious object’ – that which must be interrogated (if not rejected) for marking a place of failure in the WPS Agenda. It is marked as an indicator that the attention of feminist peace advocates has been distracted from their legitimate (definitional?) aim (of ending all wars). That object – in this and several other such accounts – is Security Council Resolution 1820 (adopted in June of 2008).  

I experienced the suspicion of Schott.
feminists who, prior to its adoption, first heard word of its possibility. The trigger of suspicion: its focus on conflict-related sexual violence.

There are many aspects of this focus that can be understood as problematic: a focus on violence inflicted on the bodies of women and children, that this violence is sexual in nature and, that the violence of concern is delimited as that which is ‘conflict-related.’ In the time since the adoption of SCR 1820 this focus has intensified and thrown up many of the problems feminists had tried to mitigate in their early advocacy. But in Otto’s 2009 review, (and evident in other reviews of the WPS Agenda since that time) the concern with this focus is stated as a more general proposition. In Otto’s estimation, SCR 1820:

marks a complete reversal of the Security Council’s earlier recalibration of its gender narrative in Resolution 1325, which emphasized women’s potential to make valuable contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding over their suffering as victims of war.203

And here it stands. The failure marked by SCR 1820 is that the Security Council’s ‘gender narrative’ – allegedly re-calibrated by Resolution 1325 – has been reversed. Contrary to the ‘undoing’ performed by SCR 1325, argues this widely-cited author, the effect of the adoption of SCR 1820 is that: “women are again defined primarily by their violability, and protective responses return with a vengeance.” She goes on to argue that, “[I]n choosing to focus on sexual violence, the Security Council has reasserted its role as a protector of women, rather than as a supporter of women’s

emancipation” – simply reinforcing the gendered narratives that drive war and this particular form of violence in war.204

In some ways, this is an easy conclusion to draw, the focus of SCR 1820 is the use of sexual violence as one of war’s weapons/tactics/strategies (the terminology shifts both in and outside the text according to use). This violence has victims and, in this context of the Council’s work on the theme of Women, Peace and Security, the victims in focus are mostly (but not exclusively) female.205 Furthermore, although Otto’s analysis of 1820’s text is somewhat cursory, as I suggested earlier, her conclusion as to its effect is not unusual. Laura Shepherd too notes that “[t]he discursive constitution of women as subjects of security does not, at first glance, seem to have changed much in the eight years elapsed between UNSCR 1325 and UNSCR 1820.206 This construction is, Shepherd continues, one that, on its surface:

> echoes the essentialist logics of gender in UNSCR 1325, logics which draw a clear link between sex and security in suggesting that women are ‘metaphor[s] for vulnerable/victim in war.”207

Rather than emphasizing “women’s potential to make valuable contributions to conflict resolution and peacebuilding,” Otto argues, Resolution 1820 emphasizes their suffering as victims of war. Simultaneously, Otto suggests that we question the privilege afforded to victims of sexual assault in this resolution and that:

> Instead of employing helpless and sexualised representations of women in the context of addressing sexual violence, the Security Council could have remained faithful to the more liberating representations of women it embraced

204 Ibid., 1.
205 Shepherd, "Sex, Security and Superhero(in)Es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond."
206 Ibid.
207 Ibid. 
in Resolution 1325 by crediting women with agency in the face of sexual violence and questioning the inevitability of their powerlessness.\textsuperscript{208}

This is an attractive proposition: “crediting women with agency in the face of sexual violence.” I hesitate. The Security Council’s policy is not only producing an abstract gender narrative that places women in the role of victim. Crediting women with agency in the face of sexual violence does not immunize them from harm. As I noted in response to this argument at the time:

For many, focusing on sexual violence in conflict is seen as reducing the issues of women and conflict to the mere victimhood of women. As many rightly argue, Resolution 1325 represented an important recognition of women as agents in conflict prevention, resolution and peacebuilding. It should not simply be seen as a way to make war safe for women. On other occasions where advocacy was done to have the Council address the issue, there was opposition from some NGOs on this very ground. For many the more important issue is women's participation in decision making at all levels – recognizing women as agents. It is undeniable that the larger goal is to ensure women's effective and full participation in peace and security issues. However, the reality is that women are not either victims or agents. This is a false dichotomy. Many women who are powerful agents of change have also been affected by sexual violence and have been victims of violence. That does not itself define them as mere victims. The issues of participation and violence are inextricably linked – sexual violence is both a cause and consequence of low levels of women's participation in all decision making and, in fact, participation in day-to-day life.\textsuperscript{209}

This is of course not the only interpretation or analysis available of SCR 1820’s effects (representational or otherwise).\textsuperscript{210} My intent here is not to offer some

\textsuperscript{210} Shepherd, for example, opens the possibilities by analyzing discursive shifts “[t]hrough the nodal point of participation” and concludes that the figure, who, in SCR 1325, is the ‘female subject of security,’ is, in SCR 1820, “perhaps in the process of becoming an agent of security.” Shepherd, "Sex, Security and Superhero(in)Es: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond," 507. I will return to this point of concerns in Chapter 5 Subjects of Practice in which I explore
perfect truth. But, how does a resolution focusing on the suffering of war, on this suffering of war, become a failure of feminists to focus on efforts that would stop war?

“Making wars safe for women”

This last one has a familiar ring to it: “from aiming to end all wars to making wars safe for women.” Anyone who has spent extended time around feminist peace advocates at the UN Security Council will probably have heard it many times, may even have used it – albeit in a slightly altered form: “1325 was not about making war safe for women.” I’m fairly certain I have taken advantage of its rhetorical flourish on several occasions. It is a neat way of capturing the idea that treating the ‘symptoms’ of war does not address its root causes – and it is the latter that was (is?) the desire of the anti-war feminists who advocated for SCR 1325. Although it appears to have passed into general use in the WPS community, I’ve also heard it spoken countless times by the person to whom it is most often credited. Readers familiar with the community engaged in WPS advocacy in New York (and especially those present in the late 1990s and early 2000s) will likely already have made the connection; would it be too much to suggest that, on seeing these words, her voice somehow reverberates the production and deployment of the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict within the Security Council’s Open Debates on WPS. The manner in which women are constituted as subjects within the Security Council’s WPS policy discourse may take us closer to thinking about where responsibility for its failings lie.

211 See, for example, the analysis in Kirby and Shepherd, "The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda."
in their memory as much as it does in mine? For those less familiar, her speaker’s biography is attached to a 2011 blog:

President of the Hague Appeal for Peace, UN representative for the International Peace Bureau and past president 2000-2006. She was among the drafters of what became Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security. She has spent her life as an activist for human rights, women’s rights and peace.212

Author biographies are strange and esoteric creatures. At least partially self-generated, they tend to reference identifying marks thought most likely to establish authority for (authorize) the associated argument – in this particular case the argument that is made in the title: “We must not make war safe for women” and repeated in the pull-quote on the blog’s index page:

We cannot pluck rape out of war and let the war go on. We must not make war safe for women. It is time to abolish war.213

Reverberating through the text, the repeated refrain: “We must not make war safe for women.” The reason for this, as implied by the last juxtaposition, is that, “it is time to abolish war.” This line makes a particular sense in light of the standard authority-markers provided: organizational affiliation and seniority of position. Even if I must confess the gap in my knowledge concerning the precise work of the International Peace Bureau or Hague Appeal for Peace, I know enough to recognize

212 Cora Weiss, "We Must Not Make War Safe for Women," 50.50 (2011). In the years I spent doing advocacy at the UN, I never really figured out what the International Peace Bureau did. I didn’t need to know to do my job and I can’t really be bothered to look now. But I learned about the Hague Appeal for Peace – a name reaching back to an era of anti-war activism situated in a Cold War world.

213 Ibid.
their historical pedigree (and longevity alone counts for something in UN advocacy and in feminist storytelling). Even if the reader is unaware of the particulars of these organizations, these markers of position suggest the author’s long-term commitment to peace and multilateralism. The last line of the biographical entry claims a life spent as “an activist for human rights, women’s rights and peace,” signalling a personal commitment enduring beyond specific institutional settings. I recognize this as a commitment much welcomed, respected and praised in feminist circles and as one that carries with it the potential of experience’s wisdom.

But it is the sentence in the middle of these other authorizing marks that most interests me: “She was among the drafters of what became Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security.” I am familiar with this particular claim to authority and have seen similar claims elsewhere and made by others. I am no longer as convinced by it as I once was. This positioning is, time and again, used to justify the superiority of the speaker’s views on WPS policy in the Security Council, regardless of the claimant’s position at the time of speaking. More often than not the claim is used to support critiques of developments in policy where those changes are read as being contrary to the original intent of the drafters of SCR 1325. As a representative of WILPF it was a claim I could easily make, at least by association – the founder of the PeaceWomen Project was amongst those individuals most active in its inception and passage, and the project itself (at least in its earlier years) claimed an authority and expertise on the resolution within the broader women’s rights efforts at the UN. Furthermore, WILPF’s own history can be traced
within histories of NGO engagement (and peace activism) both with the League of Nations and later, the UN.\textsuperscript{214} I can easily imagine “We must not make war safe for women” as a rallying cry through so many of these stories. This then is the point in which my own personal position and history is most implicated. To support institutional efforts that aim to “make war safe for women” is, in these critical narratives, to take a position that is in opposition to feminists who drafted (and supported) SCR 1325. I am not sure where to place myself.

I understand the logic operating here (or at least I think I do). The laws of war (at least as they have developed to date) take the existence/occurrence of war as a given (a feminist concern predating advocacy for the adoption of what became SCR 1325).\textsuperscript{215} Furthermore, the institutions engaged in the implementation and development of that law, such as the Security Council, are also locked into a logic that treats war as inevitable.\textsuperscript{216} To participate in the strengthening of the laws of war is then to participate in war-making (albeit at some ‘safe’ distance). This is a line one can draw, a position one can take. However, this is, in its crude form, not a position that allows room for feminists to oppose war and, simultaneously, to participate in advocacy concerning the regulation of war. Having felt myself to occupy such a

\textsuperscript{216} Carol Cohn, "Mainstreaming Gender in Un Security Policy: A Path to Political Transformation?," in \textit{Global Governance} (Springer, 2008).
position it became important to think through and explore the narratives that implied its impossibility.

“We must not make war safe for women”

In her narrative of this failure of representation, Otto constructs a divide between differently located feminists and, in so doing, produces particular (and limiting) possibilities for action for those feminists. In her telling – as academic (critic) – the failing that is SCR 1820, the failure in representation, can be traced to deliberate efforts on the part of ‘insider’ or activist feminists located directly within the Security Council advocacy space:

[I]n their efforts to extract some kind of responsibility from the Security Council for implementation of Resolution 1325, the NGO Working Group pressed the Council for a follow-up resolution.217

There is no attribution for this claim and it does not appear from Otto’s footnotes that the NGO Working Group was asked whether or not they in fact “pressed the Council for a follow-up resolution.” It is an easy enough detail to gloss, it is a story that so easily resonates, fitting neatly with those in which laws concerning ‘women’ or ‘gender equality’ have an origin story in civil society efforts and coherent accounts of feminist cause and effect always appeal. There are ways that texts – like this NGOWG press release on the adoption of SCR 1820 – could be read to support this narrative:

Reacting to today’s timely decision of the UN Security Council to strengthen UN action against sexual violence in conflict, Gina Torry of the NGO

Working Group on Women, Peace and Security on Women Peace and Security said “we are glad that the UN’s most powerful body has now recognized what many women worldwide have argued for so long: stopping sexual violence in conflict zones is important to the maintenance of international peace and security.”

Security Council Resolution 1820 (2008) paves the way for improving the UN’s response to the high levels of sexual violence in conflict-affected situations. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security welcomes the Council’s renewed emphasis on the need for women’s equal and full participation in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding. Also important is that Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon and UN agencies ensure that women and women-led organizations actively participate in developing mechanisms to protect women and girls from sexual violence. This has not been consistent UN practice to date.

The NGO Working Group welcomes also the Council’s decision to ask the Secretary-General to provide an in-depth report by 30 June 2009 on ways to reduce sexual violence against women and girls. This could be an important tool towards reducing the use of such violence. The requested study will allow for input from the UN’s NGO partners. Crucial is that the resolution requires improved UN coordination in the field and at headquarters to effectively monitor the use of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. The Council also reinforced its request to the Secretary-General to systematically include recommendations on the protection of women and girls in his reports to the Council on country-specific situations.

But then perhaps that wouldn’t be reading far enough. Certainly this letter from the NGO Working Group on the day following SCR 1820s adoption would seem to

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219 Ibid.
indicate that this was something that they supported. But to stop there is to conflate the outcome of the resolution with the intent of those who supported the issues of sexual violence in conflict being appropriately addressed by the Council:

> Despite positive aspects, the resolution could have been stronger. The Council should have implemented the Secretary-General’s earlier recommendation that it establish a dedicated mechanism to monitor violence against women within the framework of the landmark Resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security, adopted in 2000,” said Gina Torry.²²⁰

I could of course attempt to fill in the details of the narrative of this resolution’s production – I have a trail of emails in which, somewhere along the line, it was acknowledged that the US Mission had floated the idea of adopting a resolution focused on sexual violence (the timing of which would be dictated by the calendar scheduling their Council Presidency in 2008 for June). But like other feminists located within the UN at the time, we can’t quite recall when we first heard about its possibility and the narrative beginnings for each of us are fuzzy.

What interests me here, however, is not whether the account of pressure for a “follow up resolution” is accurate per se. Rather I am interested in thinking through the effects of this particular causal chain: if, as Otto argues, the adoption of a resolution focused on sexual violence perpetuates the epistemic violence through the representations it contains, how is the responsibility and burden of that ostensible failure allocated?²²¹

²²⁰ Ibid.
Where, for example, are the bodies of women that are (unacceptably) being made safer by the actions that this text might support or require? Who is it that would carry the burden for its not being adopted? How is it that we, as feminists, might think through this moment? The author here, in reflecting on her own position against SCR 1820 introduces a letter sent in early 2008 to the Security Council:

from 71 Congolese NGOs urging it, as a matter of urgency, to adopt a special resolution that focused on sexual violence because of its ‘catastrophic scale’ in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.\(^{222}\)

Is this not the agency with which Otto would like women facing sexual violence to be credited? She seems, for a moment, to recognize this and asks the sort of question one would expect of a reflexive feminist researcher:

Does this letter put my arguments at odds with those of the authors, many of whom are victims of sexual violence themselves? Am I denying their agency?\(^{223}\)

But her answer jars. “I think not” she says, “on the basis that our goals are the same and our differences are about how those goals might be achieved.”\(^{224}\) Is this all that matters in this moment, that this is just a difference of opinion on strategy? Are the goals of these differently situated women really the same – Otto in the pages of a journal published by a major university in the Global North; and those living, if not in the South Kivus or the DRC, in some other conflict zone? Are we not, in our commitment to feminist critique not thinking through how our bodies are situated in

\(^{222}\) Ibid.
\(^{223}\) Ibid.
\(^{224}\) Ibid., 9.
relation to the question at hand? There are many arguments that can be made about how women are not just victims and how one should not exceptionalise sexual violence (and these have always been part of my assessments of potential action). However, abstract critique is one thing and having to be the bodies bearing the physical and emotional cost is quite another. For those feminists situated in the Security Council policymaking community, this letter from women’s groups in the DRC was, in that moment, pointed to in advocating support for the resolution. But if it weren’t, on what basis would this feminist intervention have been refused? Certainly there were governments who, at one time or another, had resisted their being a focus on sexual violence in conflict within the Security Council – not out of representational concerns but because they thought violence against women was not an international security issue. I do not believe their views can simply be characterized, as Otto does, as valuable but simply reflecting a difference of opinion on how the goal to end violence should be realized and as productive of “tensions between activism and critique that are feminisms lifeblood.” Which bodies are left vulnerable in the interest of this tension? Who is best placed or entitled refuse the offer of protection? Who is this imagined Woman who is deployed in the interests of a pure Feminism and who is it that fails as a result?

I agree with Janet Halley that feminism must abandon its uncritical relationship to power. However, I do not see Halley’s category of Governance

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225 "The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade," 16.
Feminism as necessarily implying that those who work within institutions have intentionally abandoned their critical relation to power – which is Otto’s suggestion:

I argue that the institutional reception and management of feminist ideas works to divest them of their emancipatory content, and therefore prefer to depict the result as ‘cooptation’ rather than ‘governance feminism,’ which implies the result is intentional. 226

Are we, once we admit of our successes, irredeemably co-opted and outside of future feminist efforts? Otto sets up relationships and draws boundaries between differently situated feminist subjects in order to critique a particular outcome which has not ‘fully arrived’ or ‘turned out’ the way it was hoped, intended or envisioned. This arrival is, on a post-structuralist account, always impossible – but that does not mean giving up the attempt. As Spivak suggests, these choices are both medicine and poison. 227 Rather than seeing this as some defect that can be overcome we must acknowledge it as “the founding gap in all act or talk, most especially in acts or talk that we understand to be closest to the ethical – the historical and the political.” 228 We cannot simply step away from deciding or ignore this gap nor is it something that can be bridged as such. The ethical project is also not one of simply building knowledge – the other cannot be reached by building databases of “facts” (about women in conflict for example). 229 Rather, Spivak says, “we must somehow attempt to supplement the gap” – to engage in persistent critique to add to or aid in crossing this originary gap. 230

227 Spivak, 98.
228 Ibid.
229 Ibid., 104.
230 Ibid., 98.
Rather than an inessential extra, this supplementation is a necessary move in pursuit of the ethical position even as it can never be entirely completed. Halley asks us to acknowledge that, as feminists we are, in many areas of social and political life, not simply subordinate to, but are partners in, governance structures and practices. To govern responsibly, even on behalf of women, Halley urges, feminists should “try taking a break from their own presuppositions” of powerlessness and acknowledge: “that feminism has a will to power, and thrill to the ferocity with which it sometimes yields the power it has won.”

On this view, the critique that the focus “serves the institutional purposes of the Security Council by reinvigorating a narrative of gender that supports militarism and justifies the hegemonic use of power in a crisis” makes sense and is perhaps enough. But what else can we learn, as feminists, about engaging the hegemonic forms of institutions if we move away from a simplistic cause and effect narrative of policymaking where the focus of analysis is on a formal policy document treated as emanating from a

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233 Ibid.
monolithic entity with a single intent and, at the behest of an external force - that is, NGOs? Supporting the adoption of Resolution 1820, for example, did not come without risks for feminists in the Democratic Republic of Congo nor for women in other conflict zones in which the UN is present. It also carries risks at a less tangible symbolic level. Yes, it emphasizes a protection agenda and by reinforcing the links to the laws of war and permissible and impermissible harms, it implicitly accepts the inevitability of war. But perhaps in those moments those choices that are both medicine and poison are the ones that have to be made. Does this necessarily exile those feminists situated as participants in these actions from some proper feminism? The point here is not to defend any particular resolution as such but to open space to think of the possibilities a little differently than is allowed within grand narratives of, for example, “the powerful wanting to reinstate a protective agenda.” What happens to our analysis if we move beyond this resolution’s text as transparently reflecting authorial intent?

\[^{234}\text{See for example Heaton.}\]
Encountering Metis: The Cunning Intelligence Needed to Act in a World of Chance

I learned, for example, that ‘advocating for and monitoring policy’ really involved an endless string of meetings at which unspoken protocol dictated who was seated at the table and who at the seats against the wall, that determined how people were addressed and what sorts of critiques it was proper to raise in which sort of meeting. I learned that the best policy pitches came in the form of really good questions; that nuanced arguments are politically risky; and that being outspoken and critical was often deeply appreciated by government or UN system insiders who felt constrained by their own positions. I learned that successful advocacy involved interactions with governments over coffee and cigarettes and in hallways between meetings and that these informal encounters created spaces where persuasion was practiced and influence exerted. I learned that gossip and rumors from informal moments often made it easier to respond effectively to political opportunity and that good timing was often more important than the substance of arguments. I learned the astounding influence exerted by individuals behind the scenes and the discomfort of being an insider and part of an elite, conflicted between a feminist politics of inclusion and a desire to take advantage of transitory political opportunities that seemed to advance the agenda of activists.

The practices that matter, the ones that are socially meaningful in that space, appear as such depending on the story I am trying to tell, the gap I am trying to traverse. And so I returned to this early story and its description of that gap, written at a time that feels much closer than the present to what it was to be working as a feminist activist on WPS policy in the Security Council – [the subject position that started the trouble]. I found in that story a reflection on this disjuncture as one resulting from an encounter between my own sense of ‘being and doing’ and the sense of what that work entailed in the representations of ‘outsiders.’ In returning to
this earlier narrative I realized that what I was looking for was not an account of the practices of Security Council policymaking writ large – although that is the place of, and thus integral to, this story.

Rather I was looking to explore what it is to encounter and work within the practices of that space, its rules and procedures, the hegemonic forms that shaped, produced, and were produced by, the patterns of action in it. I was looking to take seriously the subject-position that started the trouble – the Failed Feminist of earlier accounts. It is when I scroll back to the ‘terrain’ in my old friend the OED, that I recognize the space I am looking for:

1.b. Standing-ground, position;
2.a. A tract of country considered with regard to its natural features, configuration, etc.; in military use esp. as affecting its tactical advantages, fitness for manœuvring, etc.; also, an extent of ground, region, district, territory. 235

In this sense, the discursive terrain is more than a place with distinct and finely detailed features and a layered history. It is all that. But it is also a place occupied, a position from which possible future action can and must be calculated. It is a landscape whose features appear given but are considered not, as bearing singular and static meanings, but in light of the tactical advantages they provide. What is it to think of this terrain as the text from which we read? I thus revisited my interviews with those with whom I shared this space and began to read them not as accounts of Security Council practice but as stories of feminist intervention. It was there that I encountered Metis. Although I go on to explore metis as an active concept, power or

235 OED.
form of knowledge, as I came to learn (and perhaps this is what provoked my imagination) metis appears in goddess form. Metis, in the ancient Greek religious order, was a Titan elder. She was born of Okeanos (Oceanus) and his sister Tethys and of an earlier age than Zeus – who she came to marry as his first spouse. Metis does not appear as a major figure in Greek religion – there is no cult or ritual deifying her name. Most mythologists write out her role as Athena’s mother but that too makes her an appealing figure for feminist thinking and undoing. In Hesiod’s *Theogony*, Metis occupies an important position in the ordering of the world. She appears as the first wife of Zeus:

“the wife he takes to his bed as soon as the war against the Titans is brought to an end and as soon as he is proclaimed king of the gods, and thus this marriage crowns his victory and consecrates his sovereignty as monarch.”

In Hesiod’s account, there would be no sovereignty without Metis: “without the help of the goddess, without the assistance of the weapons of cunning which she controls through her magic knowledge, supreme power could neither be won nor exercised nor maintained.” There is something in this that speaks to the critique that feminists who engage with institutions are holding up and reinforcing their hegemony. Shortly after their marriage, Zeus is forewarned by the oracular power of Gaia (the Earth) and Ouranos (the Sky) that Metis would bear children – the first a daughter which she

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237 Ibid., 57-8.
238 Ibid., 58.
already carried in her womb and after that a son who would become king.\textsuperscript{239} Zeus, attempting to forestall fate, returns home and turns against her the very weapons that make Metis invincible – namely, “cunning, deceit and the surprise attack.”\textsuperscript{240} In the most straightforward account, Zeus tricks Metis into shifting herself into the form of a fly and then swallows her – from inside his belly will make known to him everything that will bring him good or evil fortune.\textsuperscript{241} In later accounts it becomes clear that she shape-shifts in order to avoid having sex with Zeus. She ends up being entirely consumed by him. But this is not the end for Metis. She works from within Zeus’ belly and crafts a helmet and robe for her fetal daughter. The hammering as she makes the helmet causes Zeus incredible pain and, depending on the account, his head is cleaved or smashed open and Athena is born – fully formed, armed and armoured.\textsuperscript{242} While Metis is written out of most histories of Athena’s birth, her son goes on to overthrow Zeus. And, in perhaps the greatest promise that the story holds, metis as a form of knowledge remains: the cunning intelligence needed to act in a world of chance.

\textit{First Encounters}

Although I came to learn this of Metis, our first encounter passed by relatively unremarked on my part. Perhaps this is fitting for metis is described as, amongst other things, “the perfectly timed, seemingly natural and seemingly effortless quality of a

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Ibid., 66-7.
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Ibid., 67.
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Ibid., 66-7.
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learned action." Within International Relations, Iver Neumann attempted to familiarize the field with the qualities of Metis in the 2002 article *Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn.* Bjola and Kornprobst briefly revisit this in *Understanding International Diplomacy* and they note, perhaps ironically for my own story, that despite Neumann’s efforts to familiarise scholars with the concept a decade previously, “it still remains widely neglected. The neglect of the concept in IR may be related to the relatively limited number of empirical studies that take a practice-based approach but metis has a reputation for being hard to pin down and as impossible to define with any precision. That reason, as Robert Harrison points out, is that metis is “found only in praxis, or better, it hides in praxis.” This characteristic of metis, this ‘embeddedness’ in historically specific circumstance is, however, what makes metis an appealing figure.

Philologists Detienne and Vernant – the primary interlocutors of metis in contemporary social theory – describe metis in their 1976 text *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* (Les tuses de l’intelligence) as “a complex but very coherent body of mental attitudes and intellectual behavior” that combines “flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years.” J. E. Tiles

243 Neumann, 633.
244 Ibid.
247 Detienne, 3; Harrison, 16.
describes the requirements of metis as “the exercise of continual alertness, careful control, and unfailing concentration.” Elsewhere metis is described as having the “knowhow to make use of a favourable situation.” Several authors have usefully begun their engagement with the concept by describing ways of being, activities or skills thought of as requiring a high degree of metis. So, for example, “The fox and the octopus have metis. Hunters, fishermen, navigators, metalworkers, weavers, and potters exhibit metis.” Included too in the list of activities requiring extensive metis are such occupations as ‘[s]ailing, boxing, fishing, and (more cooperatively) dancing or team sports” but also the activities of “professionals who respond to accidents or national disasters.” And, directly relevant to thinking of metis in the Security Council, James C. Scott sees “[w]ar, diplomacy and politics more generally [as] metis-laden skills.” Although it may seem far-fetched to think such skills or activities ‘together’ or indeed to liken them to those of feminist policy advocacy, the logic of metis is seen to run through all of them. Detienne and Vernant acknowledge that the varied contexts and levels at which metis operates are indeed as different from one another as are:

- theogony and a myth about sovereignty, the metamorphoses of a marine deity, the forms of knowledge of Athena and Hephaestus, of Hermes and Aphrodite, of Zeus and Prometheus, a hunting trap, a fishing net, the skills of a basket-maker, of a weaver, of a carpenter, the mastery of a navigator, the flair of a

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249 Bjola and Kornprobst, 126.
250 Tiles, 387.
252 Neumann, 633.
politician, the experienced eye of a doctor, the tricks of a crafty character such as Odysseus, the back-tracking of a fox and the polymorphism of an octopus, the solving of enigmas and riddles and the beguiling rhetorical illusionism of the sophists.\textsuperscript{253}

\textit{Feminist Interventions as Metis?}

What then can thinking with this figure figure/concept/form of intelligence reveal of the practices of feminist interventions in Security Council policymaking?

For Scott, what is distinctive about these metis-laden occupations, is that:

(1) they are similar but never precisely identical, (2) they require quick and practiced adaptation that becomes almost ‘second nature’ to the practitioner, (3) they may involve ‘rules of thumb,’ but skill typically is acquired through practice (often apprenticeship) and a developed ‘feel’ or ‘knack’ for strategy, (4) they resist simplification to deductive principles which can successfully be conveyed through book-learning, and (5) the environments in which they are practiced are so complex and non-repeatable that formal procedures of rational decision-making are impossible to apply.”\textsuperscript{254}

Scott’s assessment is one that resonated with my own experience and reflection on what it is to do (and learn to do) feminist advocacy in the space of the UN Security Council. As I explored in the Logics of Practice and again here, feminist interventions in Security Council policymaking exhibit qualities and logics that suggest it can be understood as an enactment of metis. This enquiry necessitates a return to the place in which my more conscious encounter with Metis began – De Certeau’s The Practice of Everyday Life; a work he frames, in his introduction to the English translation, as being “part of a continuing investigation of the ways in which

\textsuperscript{253} Detienne, 2.  
\textsuperscript{254} Scott, 75-6.
users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate.” 255 De Certeau sees ways of operating within imposed systems as constituting “the resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations.” 256 He sees metis as being close to the everyday tactics with which he is concerned, “through its ‘sleights of hand, its cleverness and its stratagems,’ and through the spectrum of behaviours that it includes, from know-how to trickiness.” 257

If we take seriously that feminist interventions operate within and are constituted by the hegemonic practices of the Security Council, then they can be likened to the users of ‘popular culture’ with whom De Certeau is concerned. To engage within the system and attempt to shift the prevailing discourse in the Council is to operate and, in a loose sense, to ‘use’ its terms. 258 As Hunt reminds us, counter-hegemonic projects are not “constructed ‘elsewhere,’ fully finished and then drawn into place, like some Trojan horse of the mind, to do battle with the prevailing hegemony.” 259 They start from that which exists and then engage in a process of...

255 de Certeau, xi. His analytical focus is on the articulation of everyday or popular culture by those who are its ‘consumers’ or ‘users’ rather than its makers and where the available ways of using are determined within the system. Ibid., xiii. He is interested in this project in isolating that production of the system that takes place in the process of its utilization.
256 Ibid., 18.
257 Ibid., 81.
258 De Certeau points out, “[i]n linguistics, ‘performance’ and ‘competence’ are different: the act of speaking (with all the enunciative strategies that implies) is not reducible to a knowledge of the language.” Ibid., xiii. By adopting the point of view of enunciation – which is the subject of our study – we privilege the act of speaking; according to that point of view, speaking operates within the field of a linguistic system; it effects an appropriation, or reappropriation, of language by its speakers; it establishes a present relative to a time and place; and it posits a contract with the other (the interlocutor) in a network of places and relations.” Ibid.
259 Hunt, 313.
opposition. Feminists operating within the Security Council space readily admit that they are required to work within a set of fairly rigid constraints. As CM succinctly put it, on being asked what was particular about feminist advocacy in that space:

There is a set agenda. It is a very narrow focus. You have to relate everything to international peace and security. There are only these countries that are relevant in that specific time. They have their own national agenda.260

It is in this paradoxical position of having to use the strictures of the form in order to undo it, that those subordinated by the system work to create a space of politics. As De Certeau frames it: “[a] practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for manoeuvres of unequal forces” and, as will be discussed in the final chapter, “for utopian points of reference.”261 This understanding is one reflected by several of my interlocutors. Rather than seeing the limits as terminal points, the dominant practices of Security Council policymaking are seen as the material with which interventions begin and as the source of inventiveness:

It’s sort of like being creative….its sometimes easier to be creative when you have limitations and I feel like the limitations of the Security Council make it a delicious place for advocacy.262

By referencing the terms of the system, subordinate users are able to place themselves as legible in relation to that which dominant actors already ‘know’ – those forms that resonate with familiarity as ‘belonging.’ The creative and political project is to find

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260 CM.
261 de Certeau, 18.
262 Detienne, 3; CM.
ways to introduce elements believed to transcend the boundaries of that system.\textsuperscript{263} How that process begins or how far it proceeds depends very much on the particular context and falls along a gradient of oppositional possibilities.\textsuperscript{264} Comaroff and Comaroff note that counterhegemonic efforts may take a range of forms: “[j]ust as technologies of control run the gamut from overt coercion to implicit persuasion, so modes of resistance may extend across a similarly wide spectrum.”\textsuperscript{265}

Many evaluations of such counter-hegemonic attempts focus on their ‘disciplinary effect.’ Although the limits in which these interventions are produced remain key, De Certeau’s inquiry quite deliberately follows an alternate path. Although similarly concerned with the “microphysics of power,” De Certeau distinguishes his work from that of Foucault’s in Discipline and Punish. Like Foucault he aims to “perceive and analyze the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning by means of a multitude of ‘tactics’ articulated in the details of everyday life.”\textsuperscript{266} However, De Certeau argues, “the presence and circulation of a representation … tells us nothing about what it is for its users.”\textsuperscript{267} Only by analysing the manipulation of forms by those “who are not its makers” is it possible he argues, to “gauge the difference or

\textsuperscript{263} Hunt, 314; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 3-4, 7. Laclau and Mouffe, 113.
\textsuperscript{266} de Certeau, xv.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., xiii.
similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilization."\textsuperscript{268, 269}

Thus, rather than making “clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology,” De Certeau’s goal is to find ways “to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of ‘discipline.’”\textsuperscript{270}

\textit{Forms of Use}

Feminist interventions in international policy are, as suggested earlier, often understood as contestations over the meaning of words of a particular type. The analysis of the ways concepts are articulated or understood in particular discursive formations is an important feature of critical scholarship in this area – Shepherd’s initial analysis of WPS discourse was of this sort discussed earlier was of this sort. However if, as I am attempting here, we move from the textual surface of the WPS resolutions and attempt to account for a broader set of interventions, it is helpful to think about what it is that makes these concepts amenable as objects or grounds of political contestation. The work of Kosselleck, Williams and Skinner surveyed

\textsuperscript{268} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{269} “Confronted by images on television, the immigrant worker does not have the same critical or creative elbow-room as the average citizen. On the same terrain, his inferior access to information, financial means, and compensations of all kinds elicits an increased deviousness, fantasy, or laughter. Similar strategic deployments, when acting on different relationships of force, do not produce identical effects. Hence the necessity of differentiating both the ‘actions’ or ‘engagements’ (in the military sense) that the system of products effects within the consumer grid, and the various kinds of room to maneuver left for consumers by the situations in which they exercise their ‘art.’” ibid., xvii.
\textsuperscript{270} Ibid.
previously suggests that the appeal is to be found in the fact that the semantic ‘carrying capacity’ of these concepts extends further than the ‘mere’ words employed.”271 Particularly appealing in multilateral and consensus based policy environments like the UN is that they offer “a spacious kind of hanger on which those of different persuasions are able to hang their coats.”272 Their appeal lies, not in something inherent to their ‘meaning’ but in the sense of malleability, elasticity and abstraction they provide – a space into which policymakers (and others) can imagine (and later fit) a range of future concrete implementation programs.273 Ambiguity provides policymakers with the required “costumes of consensus,” and yet, at the same time, allows subordinate actors, the benefits of remaining within the bounds of political legibility.274 However, the work of Polletta (with respect to social movement

273 Christie, 176. They can do this in particular ways when the term is, for example one that appears as, or is reminiscent of, familiar (and powerful) forms. So, for example, the notion of ‘social capital’ and ‘human security’ allowed proponents of non-market or human-centred (and often liberal, if not radical) ideas to ‘speak to power’ and be heard in fora in which capital or security were the stock-in-trade. In the case of ‘social capital,’ while not all accept the reduction of important social connections and networks to numbers, the concept “gained ground among economists [at the World Bank] precisely because it is couched in such familiar language.” Michael Edwards, "Enthusiasts, Tacticians, and Skeptics: Social Capital and the Structures of Power," in *The Search for Empowerment: Social Capital as Idea and Practice at the World Bank*, ed. Anthony; Woolcock Bebbington, Michael; Guggenheim, Scott E., Olson, Elizabeth A. (Bloomfield, Connecticut: Kumarian Press, 2006), 95.
274 The power of moving between the familiar and unfamiliar, between accepted and new forms and meanings, is found in the technique of bricolage that Tarrow explains: “pulls together accepted and new frames to legitimate contention and mobilize accepted frames for new purposes. … to unite diverse actors; at the same time their meanings can be ambiguous and multivalent across different movement constituencies, which allows leaders to attract diverse constituencies that come together behind ambiguous symbols” Tarrow, 146.
narratives), and Crowley (in her discussion of the binary rhetoric of reproductive rights) suggests that this quality is not limited to conceptual forms and that the ambiguity of a range of social forms makes them available and appealing for re-use. As I discuss below, the figure that I have come to refer to as the Woman-in-Conflict provides a similarly ambiguous space, which actors within the Council space attempt to imbue with meaning. As that section shows, the creative potential of these articulations is not unlimited and this figure is one produced in particular moments of representation by the everyday practices and relationships of power within the Security Council space. As De Certeau points being constructed with/within the ‘vocabularies of established languages’ these ways of ‘making-do remain ‘subordinated to the prescribed syntactical forms’ of the social space. But, as he goes on to argue, and as I explore in Logics of Practice, this subordinate position in the systems of power is what underlies the logic of metis. Such action De Certeau points out, has “as its precondition, contrary to the procedures of Western science, the non-autonomy of its field of action.” To initiate this move, De Certeau argues, is to be “concerned with battles or games between the strong and the weak, and with the ‘actions’ which remain possible for the latter. These ways of operating, De Certeau posits, produce trajectories through the system that ‘trace out the ruses of other interests and desires that are neither determined nor captured by the systems in which

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275 Koselleck, 77,85,105.
276 de Certeau, 34.
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid., xv.
279 Ibid., 34.
they develop.”²⁸⁰ Perhaps the tactics and procedures of feminist policy advocacy WPS advocates can, much like the “procedures and ruses of consumers” with which De Certeau is concerned, when pushed to their limits, compose a “network of an antidiscipline” that is feminist.²⁸¹ That possibility is one that I begin tentatively to explore in the final chapter – Telling Relations: Holding Space

²⁸⁰ Ibid.
²⁸¹ Ibid., xv.
‘Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

I am here for my friends and colleagues, Samira al Nuaimi and Umaira al Jebara, who were recently killed defending women’s rights in Iraq; Razan Zaitouneh who was abducted for documenting human rights violations in Syria; and all activists who risk their lives daily to make women, peace and security not just a resolution, but a reality.’

Statement by Ms. Suaad Allami
UN Security Council Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, 28th October 2014

It was with these words that Ms Suaad Allami began her address to the Security Council Open Debate in October 2014 on the occasion of that body’s now-familiar marking of the anniversary of Resolution 1325 and the inauguration of Women and Peace and Security as a thematic item on its agenda. Just as the holding of an Open Debate has become a ritualized form through which to mark this occasion, statements such as Ms Allami’s have also become part of the regular practice of the Security Council policy community. A civil society speaker has, since 2004, appeared at all such debates, including those now held earlier in the calendar year to consider the specific sub-theme of ‘sexual violence in conflict,’ and three

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283 The Open Debate is a form of debate in the Security Council that allows for the participation, through the Council’s rules of procedure, of non-Security Council Member States as well as UN entity and civil society representatives.
women took up this position in the Open Debate held recently to mark the resolution’s 15th anniversary.285

Beyond the ritualized incantations of greeting with which Allami begins, her words are striking for bringing something not usually brought into the austere space of the Security Council – names. These are not names of states in which wars are fought or those of the government officials or bureaucrats that are required by form and relationships of power to be thanked and acknowledged. These names are those of women who have died, been tortured and abducted in war for their activism to, as Allami puts it, ‘make women, peace and security not just a resolution, but a reality.’ In that naming, the statement that follows becomes a tribute and Samira al Nuaimi, Umaima al Jebara, and Razan Zaitouneh, a present reminder to the audience that it is in the lives of real, individual, embodied and very particular women that the (now eight)286 Women, Peace and Security resolutions matter, and do so in ways that go beyond simply being resolved to act. There is also embedded in Allami’s words the subtle reminder of how feminist activism, advocacy and scholarship – including that which resulted in the adoption of UNSCR 1325 – has sought to shift and complicate the way in which women and their roles in relation to conflict are understood within international security discourse.287

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287 See for example, Cockburn.
As emphasized in critiques of the WPS Agenda, one of the oft-cited claims of feminists working for Resolution 1325 was that women play multiple, and often concurrent, roles in conflict situations that go well beyond that of passive victim requiring protection. Each of the names spoken by Suaad Allami is that of a woman whose life is not defined solely by victimhood and which, in fact, complicates any simple dichotomy between victimhood and its imagined opposite – agency. The act of saying names into the Security Council space in that moment then seems to negotiate through the dichotomy and produce a very particular, material and complex sense of the figure I refer to here as the Woman-in-Conflict. It is a naming that carries with it the lived experiences, needs and interests of women whose lives are affected by conflict. It is these, feminists have argued, that should form the basis of knowledge upon which policy and programs are built.\textsuperscript{288} It is, of course, not possible to determine – nor meet – the needs and interests of the uncountable, faceless and nameless women affected by and living through war. Rather the inevitable representation of these women takes place through imbuing the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict with particular meaning or characteristics that, in turn, construct the horizons of possibility for current and future policy (and its implementation). Even when not named as such, the is the ever-present referent in policy discussions, the

shadow figure on whose behalf advocacy efforts are made and policy adopted, critic...policy discussions. She is referred to as an anonymous gender disaggregated number in statistical accounts of victims of sexual violence or holders of political office; as an individual who wants a particular mode of security; whose body is injured and violated by men, who is a refugee to whom humanitarian aid must be fairly dispersed; who wants to be able to join the military and fight in combat; who is a peacemaker and wants to rid her community of small arms and light weapons; who wants to be part of relief and recovery efforts; who should be at the peace table and making policy; who is a patient receiving care at a rural clinic in Haiti; who is a member of a support group for survivors of sexual violence in Bosnia; who signs letters demanding Council action on the situation in the Central African Republic; and who makes demands of international security decision-makers about their decisions to invade countries or impose sanctions. Credibility is claimed, and recognition given, based in part on the assumed ‘authenticity’ and ‘transparency’ of those purporting to represent her experiences.

As earlier suggested, imbuing this figure with meaning is a process that goes well beyond the textual representations in the Council’s resolutions. The moment of naming here, for example, opens space for particular experiences and complex identities within the space that is the Security Council’s thematic Women, Peace and
Security Open Debates. In the section that follows, I explore how this figure is produced as a subject in the civil-society statements (over time) in this space. These statements, such as that delivered by Ms Allami in 2014, provide rich grounds for thinking about the production of the subject position of the Woman-in-Conflict as a feminist articulation of the quotidian practices of the Council.

*Security Council Open Debates as a Site of Practice*

Of course the Open Debates are not self-evidently worthy of analysis. There is certainly the critique that they are nothing but an empty ritual which, rather than producing any concrete outcome (except, on occasion, another resolution whose provisions must be implemented) serve simply as an opportunity for governments to engage in listing their accomplishments in mutual self-congratulation even as they bemoan, in mostly general terms, the ‘lack of effective implementation.’ Having attended many such debates during five years spent as a policy advocate for an NGO in the UN Women, Peace and Security policy community, I am well aware how these day-long events can turn into a mind-numbing fog of undifferentiated speeches of just this sort – a sensation not alleviated when analysing them in transcript form from my new location in academia. Sherri Gibbings, in her research in this environment, notes that gender advocates expressed to her concerns that member states “might be making public statements that express their commitment to gender equality, but in reality they
would act differently.” Yet, from looking at the number of states delivering statements in each such debate (and as my interviews made clear) even those jaded by the experience of ‘non-productive’ Open Debates over the years seem unwilling to pass up the next opportunity to speak. In the 2015 debate, civil-society speaker Julienne Lusenge of the DRC in fact began by noting that she had first addressed the Council in 2008 and that seven years later she “thought long and hard before deciding to come back here, and wondered whether or not it was worth the effort.” By her presence she clearly decided it was and as Gibbings notes, advocates, despite complaints that the “UN was just words…afforded importance to its speeches and language.”

The Open Debate form is also one that has drawn significant numbers of non-council member states not directly engaged in policy making but who are implicated in its implementation. This has particularly been the case in anniversary years considered in the UN as especially significant (multiples of 5 and 10). The 15th anniversary debate saw 112 member states requesting speaking slots and was the largest Open Debate ever hosted on any theme. The 10th and 15th anniversary debates were also declared to be ‘high-level’ events – signifying the attendance of

291 Gibbings, 535.
292 See, for example, the Open Debate to mark the 10th Anniversary of resolution 1325. U.N., Security Council, 6411th meeting, S/PV.6411 (26 October, 2000).
high status government ministers (such as, for example, the US Secretary of State and other foreign ministers in 2010 and the Spanish Prime Minister in 2015) and, on several occasions, the UN Secretary General. In the absence of formal accountability mechanisms, the debates also stand in as a way to mark or evaluate progress (or lack thereof) on the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The broad participation also makes this venue an attractive one for NGOs to take advantage of naming and shaming tactics of international human rights advocacy that rely for their persuasiveness on being performed before an audience (although as I argue below this takes place in a very circumscribed manner). Furthermore, it is my sense that, although there may be differences in form and specificity, neither government, UN nor NGO participants tend to speak in these debates in ways that are markedly different from the general tenor of the conversation within the policy community. As such they are a useful form in which to examine the shaping of discourse within the UN Women, Peace and Security policy community.

As I will explore further below, the civil-society statements at these debates also make visible not only the points of contact between different actors implicated in policy but also some of the myriad social practices in the policy community through which meaning is shaped and various subject positions produced. As civil society

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294 This is some ways similar to the human rights framework and this point is one made by Hesford in relation to her choices of text selection. Hesford reiterates the point made by Merry, 16.that “Human rights law is itself primarily a cultural system. Its limited enforcement mechanisms mean that the impact of human rights is a matter of persuasion rather than force, of cultural transformation rather than coercive change.” Wendy S Hesford, Spectacular Rhetorics: Human Rights Visions, Recognitions, Feminisms, ed. Inderpal; Kaplan Grewal, Caren; Wiegman, Robyn, Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 21.
advocacy interventions, the statements and their enclosed recommendations are, quite
directly and self-consciously continuing attempts to construct ‘meaning’ in relation to
what enacting the Women, Peace and Security agenda should entail. But even as they
do this, they produce particular understandings of the Woman-in-Conflict not only
through what is said but also by whom and in what way. What will be explored here
is the contestability of this subject position and the way in which the Woman-in-
Conflict comes to appear in the Security Council space. It examines too the
individuals and groups (such as the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and
Security) who come to fill her contours and express the needs and interests to which
policymakers are expected to respond.

The Figure of the Woman-in-Conflict as a Contestable Form

Exploring the production of this figure is not intended to suggest that there is
some universal or essential ‘Woman’ who exists in a similarly universal/essential
‘Conflict’ and whose views, interests and needs can be fully known or discoverable.
The notion of a stable and universal identity ‘Woman’ that is assumed by such laws
and policies (and much Western philosophical discourse) has been the subject of
significant feminist critique, as has the way in which some (primarily Western)
feminist texts have produced a singular monolithic ‘Third World Woman’ as
subject.”295 As Gayatri Spivak, whose work here is particularly helpful, notes,

295 See for example, the essays in Linda; Seidman Nicholson, Steven, ed. Social
Postmodernism: Beyond Identity Politics (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge
University Press, 1995). See too Wendy S; Kozol Hesford, Wendy, ed. Just Advocacy:
Women's Human Rights, Transnational Feminisms, and the Politics of Representation (New
“Woman” has been constructed in the interests of prevailing economic orders – from the ending of European colonialism through the initiation of neo-colonialism and in today’s globalizing postmodern electronic capitalism. The figure that passes through these orders emerges in today’s UN Security Council as the Woman-in-Conflict. Within that context, one of the primary concerns of feminist intervention has been that understandings of women as historical subjects, and their varied and particular relations to conflicts, have most often been reduced to representations of Woman as Victim and the International Community and the West produced and situated as Saviour and Protector.

There is little space in this view for understanding women as, for example, soldiers, peace negotiators, holders of political office or perpetrators of horrific violence. Furthermore, any specificity of race, class, sexuality et cetera fades from view.

In many ways, this reductive form that suppresses singularity in order to in order to establish a ‘fact’ may be inevitable when, as was the case with UNSCR 1325, recourse is had to forms of law as a way to some imagined social justice.

Law, by its nature requires an abstract placeholder in order to make future action possible in

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297 This description is reminiscent of the subjects produced in human rights discourse and described by feminist legal scholar Makau Mutua (2001) as a triangularized metaphor in western human rights discourse that pits ‘savages’ against both their ‘victims’ and ‘saviours.”


298 Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, 44.
the diversity of specific situations for which it is impossible to account in advance. This is so even as that accounting for possible futures is constrained by current understandings. However, despite exclusions rendered by the category of Woman and its ultimate impossibility, it is also one that has enabled and grounded political action, including that which resulted in UNSCR 1325.299 Perhaps most cogently here, inside such spaces as the Security Council, it may be a category that cannot simply be left behind. As Spivak points out, “‘Woman’ is the word that has been taken for granted by the UN” and “[w]ithin a certain broadly defined group of the world’s women, with a certain degree of flexibility in class and politics, the assumptions of a sex-gender system, an unacknowledged biological determination of behaviour, and an object-choice scenario defining female life300 are shared at least as common currency’ – a currency that is no longer a mere convenience but one without which no movement can now work.301 However, it is not sufficient to thus argue that invoking the name Woman in policy is simply a ‘strategic use of a positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’302 – an early idea put forward by Spivak as a way to think through the sometime inevitability of invoking essences. As she notes in a later interview, this call for ‘strategic essentialism’ was often taken up in ways that left strategy behind, erasing the move’s critical potential and leaving it to become an

300 Listed as ‘(children and/or public life; population control and/or development).Spivak, Death of a Discipline, 44-5.
301 Ibid., 44-6.
ali for capital. But, rather than rejecting out of hand (as some taking an anti-essentialist position have done) the ‘impulse toward generalization’ in feminism as it engages with policy, Spivak seeks to explore how one can work with the form. In fact, she argues, to do otherwise (and she notes some “have the ignorance and/or luxury” of so doing) would be to ‘throw away every good of every international initiative.”

If this category cannot be abandoned and we must learn to take seriously the challenge of learning to work with the general form ‘woman’, as those engaged in policy must in some way do in order to remain legible, what does this mean? Chantal Mouffe suggests that the first step is to understand the form ‘woman’ as it appears and is produced as subordinate in particular discourses. This is preliminary to attempting to then transform that meaning through articulatory practices. There is significant feminist scholarship on war and on security that has done this sort of work. It is, however, also a way in which one can think about the work of feminist activists working within the Security Council policy field. The statement by Suaad Allami with which we began, for example, can be read as an attempt to, at least partially, fix the meaning of the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict in non-subordinate forms, including by bringing in the particularity of individual women’s lives, so as to

303 Ibid.
304 Death of a Discipline, 46.
305 Laclau and Mouffe, 113. Laclau and Mouffe define articulation as “any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice” at 105.
open up alternate subject positions and possibilities. It is of course impossible in both theoretical and practical terms for the stories (and even names) of the many millions of historically situated women connected to various events framed as war over time, to come before the Security Council to speak.

To think then about the forms of subjectivity that are produced by these statements requires attending closely to the ways they inevitably function as moments of representation enacted in practice, moments that are deeply political and shot through with relations of power: ‘the issues of who has the power to represent whom and which events are rendered visible or invisible are profoundly important.’³⁰⁷ Who tries to describe and fill its contours and in what moments? How is the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict constructed and performed in relation to other subject positions, objects and practices in the policy community? It is hoped that exploring the answers to these questions will help those concerned with shifting the Women, Peace and Security agenda think about what possibilities for action are made available or foreclosed by the logics of practice of the Security Council and the Women, Peace and Security policy community.

*Appearing in the Security Council*

The honorifics with which Allami’s statement begins – ‘Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen’ – and the profusion of deferential expressions of thanks for the ‘honor and privilege’ and the ‘opportunity’ to speak, are reminders of

³⁰⁷ Nicholas Mirzoeff, 2006 at 23 per Hesford, 22.
the institutionally subordinate position into which the Woman-in-Conflict must emerge. In fact, viewing the statements as separate self-standing written texts, it is easy to miss that their delivery in the Security Council is one that, even before it begins, is situated in a subordinate position by the convergence of both realpolitik and the somewhat arbitrary rules of procedure and formalities of ritual. Despite the emergence of the regular practice of hosting an Open Debate, doing so, and setting its boundaries through prior acts, e.g. by deciding on a specific theme for debate, remains the prerogative of the Council. It is one specifically held and exercised by the Member State holding the Council Presidency for the month by virtue of the somewhat arbitrary fact of the position of the state’s name in the English alphabetical order of names of Council members for the year.308

The power of the Council presidency is not an insignificant one and was felt most recently when Spain, who held the position in October 2015, decided only a month before to shift by 10 days the date of the 15th anniversary debate. This decision was taken despite a year-long planning process and government, UN and civil society actors having organized events to coincide with the debate; an infuriating and frustrating situation pointed out by several NGO and government representatives in the weeks that followed.309 Civil society were left with the burden and expense of

scrambling to change travel plans and visas for the women scheduled to speak and
left participants in the many other anniversary events unable to attend the debate itself
or having to arrange to stay in New York for a longer period. The reason for the
upheaval: the Spanish Prime Minister, unavailable on the original date, had, as one
activist put it, ‘decided he wanted a photo opportunity’ and by his personally chairing
the debate to show the level of support his government gave to the agenda; this
support, ironically, prioritized his own schedule and convenience above that of the
women ostensibly at the heart of that agenda.

Appreciating the power of the Council Presidency also affects the significance
one attaches to the substantive theme put forward to frame the debate. Although the
theme could be read as reflective of the concerns of the Security Council or of
consensus in the policy community, it is perhaps more likely that it is a theme of
interest to the State holding the Presidency to whom the theme-setting prerogative
falls. Consciousness of this arbitrarily allocated power is evident in the practice of
NGOs meeting with staff of newly elected Council members to discuss, for example,
the practices and possibilities of the Open Debate form. Work can, and is, being done
by feminist advocates to shape the thematic frameworks of debates ahead of time; for
example, by finding ways (including through ongoing conversations with supportive
representatives within the permanent membership) to provide input on the concept
notes circulated to member states announcing the hosting of an Open Debate. These
set out the theme around which the debate will be centred and on which governments
are expected to focus their speeches. There are also advocacy letters written each year
to all member states encouraging their participation and presenting NGO Working Group recommendations for action; these recommendations are often referenced by Member States in their statements – thus reinforcing their presence in the debate.\textsuperscript{310}

Once inside the space, however, the President’s formal words of introduction and ritual framing too serve as a reminder that the civil society speaker is there on sufferance and as a result of arrangements reached by the Council outside of public view: “In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council’s prior consultations and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure [insert here name of civil society].”\textsuperscript{311} Procedural rule 39 produces a particular relationship between the Security Council as an entity and those speakers who are invited because they are “consider[ed] competent for the purpose, to supply it [the Security Council] with information or to give other assistance in examining matters within its competence.”\textsuperscript{312} The Woman-in-Conflict is thus positioned here in a particular subordinate position that is explicitly instrumentalized as a source of information or ‘other assistance’ but, it must be remembered, is also imbued with a measure of authority. Her role in this moment is to present a ‘first-hand’ account of her experience as some sort of ‘native informant’ and her narrative constructed perhaps so as to meet, at some level, the Council’s expectations of usefulness. This

\textsuperscript{310} See for example the letters here: http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/advocacy/letters/.
\textsuperscript{312} Security Council, " Provisional Rules of Procedure of the Security Council."
positioning of the Woman-in-Conflict as a ‘resource’ is not limited to the Council’s Open Debates but operates alongside rights-based arguments as a central logic of the Women, Peace and Security discourse. For those in the NGO Working Group,

you know the work that we are doing is trying to get the Council to incorporate and live up to this obligation on Women, Peace and Security in its daily work. and so the people who come, need to be working on some aspect of that daily work. because we're trying to get the council members to understand, we want these people to be able to speak to the council members and say ‘I’m doing this daily work and there's a gender dimension to it.”

And, JS remarks, “Council members respond to that. Even if for political reasons they will disagree they respond because it is an expert talking about the country situation that they know and are invested in and enmeshed in.” For those advocating for feminist positions, the contributions of these women provides a level of legitimacy and, even if it doesn’t always work, “it also makes it far more difficult for them to push back…because it’s so concrete.”

In general JS points out, the need for feminists to present expertise on specific issues and specific countries has grown as the WPS policy in the Council has developed because there is, more generally “more being done on the WPS agenda.” For Gibbings, a “focus on the value of women’s knowledge and their contribution to great efficiency” emerges from UNSCR 1325 itself but must also be understood as part of a larger shift in UN

314 Ibid.
315 Ibid.
discourse. This has seen the “logic of the market…extended to the operation of state functions” in a variety of arenas.\(^{316}\)

Although the instrumentalising of the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict can and should be critiqued, the act of presenting her narrative in these debates also bears the trace of the success of feminist practices and feminist IR theory that, as Christine Sylvester points out, has looked to physical, emotional and socio-ethical experiences as a way to understand war.\(^ {317}\) In the Security Council, in some general sense, the ‘experience’ of the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict, becomes determinative of what comes to be understood as the ‘needs and interests’ of historically situated, material women in various places.\(^ {318}\) So-called first-hand experience is read as giving ‘authentic’ form to these inevitable moments of representation. As Spivak reminds us, however, there can be no real claim of authenticity and the brandishing of concrete experience by those situated as elites within socialised capital can only serve to consolidate the international division of labour.\(^ {319}\) We should not pretend that

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\(^{316}\) Gibbings, 529-31.


\(^{318}\) At least as measured by what the UN or other international organizations ‘provide’ both materially and otherwise.

transparency is possible but carefully attend to the act of representation itself and examine the positionality of those engaged in such representational acts.\footnote{Ibid.; \textit{A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present} (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), ix. See also Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," \textit{Critical Inquiry} 17, no. 4 (1991).}

\textit{Filling the Space}

Who is it then that is here ‘considered competent for the purpose’ of the Security Council and imagined as being closer somehow to this almost mythical figure of the Woman-in-Conflict in whose interests these debates are being held? What can be gathered about how this figure is understood through thinking about the individuals who hold the position and fill the space in debates? If the logic here is one of the ‘authentic’ experience holding a measure of authority, whose experience is it to which our attention is directed and who decides what experience matters?

In each of the statements the speaker is someone coded as biologically female and in the majority of cases this is a claim to \textit{relevant} experience that is extended by a statement of national origin of a country understood (at least within the UN space) as being one that is in or has emerged from a state of conflict and that is officially ‘on the agenda’ of the Council. So immediately following her statement of organizational affiliation and representational authority, Amina Megheirbi, who spoke in the debate in 2012, states: ‘I have lived through the violence imposed on the Libyan people by a brutal dictator for 42 years.’\footnote{United Nations, Security Council, 6722\textsuperscript{th} meeting, S/PV.6411 (23 October 2012).} This latter point is significant in that from it we can posit some possible explanation for 12 of the 18 speakers being from countries on the
African continent (10 of those claiming this explicitly), and one speaker being from Afghanistan and another from Iraq. These women are meant to bring information useful to the council and it is these places in which the peace operations mandated by the Council are situated – a fact which itself speaks to global politics. However, what if there is a desire, for argument’s sake, to go beyond serving the call for immediate utility? What if civil society wishes to draw the attention of the Security Council, the UN or the international community more broadly, to a conflict which is not officially under the Council’s gaze? What of having civil society representatives from Ukraine or Colombia or Burma or Syria speak? What about using these speaking spaces as an opportunity to shift understandings of these wars and of war as a concept? It is here that the power of the institution of the Security Council again becomes visible and Realist visions of international relations and the post-WWII hegemony held in place through the UN’s structures come rushing back in.

Approving a speaker from one of the countries mentioned above would draw attention to conflicts that members of the Security Council (especially the 5 permanent members) might arguably find unwelcome in the public space of an Open Debate – whether because of a desire to limit scrutiny of their own involvement or because it might otherwise be viewed as complicating or threatening for them or their allies. So while women from Iraq have addressed the Council on several occasions in the last 8 years, their doing so in the debate held in 2003 was “considered too controversial at the time.”322 While outright refusal of a particular speaker may have

322 Gibbings, 524.
happened at some point in time, it seems that the Security Council can depend on a level of self-discipline on the part of NGO representatives who look to secure this speaking position. The consequences of their trying to insist on a controversial speaker would be, at least to some Member State representatives with whom I have spoken, wasteful of political capital and damaging to long-standing relationships of trust on which the exchange of sensitive information is predicated; the accessing of information is one of the key logics driving this policy space. It is because of these potential consequences, and perhaps a self-understanding on the part of NGO representatives at the UN that they bear a responsibility to hold space open for the future and, in the interest of a longer-term feminist agenda, that they refrain from controversial action. This holding of space, however, functions in the present to limit the range of individuals who give particularity to the general form of the Woman-in-Conflict in the Security Council. The production of this subject position then takes place against other subject relations that have a history and are projected as ongoing in the future.

*Institutionalized Relationships of Access*

The most obvious of these relationships is that of any particular speaker or potential speaker with the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (“NGO Working Group”). In all but three of the cases considered, it was the NGOWG and its members who facilitated, including financially in many cases, the presence and statements of the individual women appearing before the Council and
the group’s coordinator has filled the position on two occasions. The support of the group has been important to women who have come to New York to speak – the city and the UN complex can be intimidating and confusing and the group’s members provide valuable assistance in navigating these spaces successfully. Furthermore, the group’s contacts and ongoing relationships with member states enable women visiting to set up bilateral meetings that are important for their work at home. Certainly the absence of this support was felt in at least one case where a government chose at the last minute to select an additional civil-society speaker beyond those put forward by the NGO Working Group.

This dominant NGO coalition in the New York policy space positions itself as a “bridge between women’s human rights defenders working in conflict-affected situations, and policy makers at UN Headquarters.” However, although the trip offers opportunities to further their own work, this bridge is not simply one that provides a path for women to take the initiative and come to New York and address the Council in their own interest. In each of the statements, the speaker delivers the statement not only on her own behalf and that of her local constituency (however that is formulated). In 10 of the statements, the speaker begins the act of representation by saying that they “speak on behalf of the NGO Working Group” before then adding, “I am also here in my capacity as” head/founder/president/advocate for an organization and constituency in their country of origin. Here, the Woman-in-Conflict becomes a

324 See www.womenpeacesecurity.org and the mission set out there.
subject created in subordination to the NGO Working Group on whose behalf she is speaking and she at times almost disappears from view. In most of the statements, the first-person personal pronoun “I” appears very seldom. It appears in the beginning – “I am speaking;” in introducing the substance of the statement – “I want to address / I will address”; and in closing -“I ask/I appeal/ I thank.” This first-person pronoun also appears as a reminder of the authority on which the speaker draws as being one connected to war and particular wars through relevant experience. So we see, for example, in the statement of Amina Megheirbi in the debate in February 2012 the majority of the points made are made as ‘civil society’ expressed as ‘we’ – ‘We urge all actors to address the root causes of sexual violence’ – and then once toward the end of the statement – ‘As a Libyan, I want to emphasize the necessity of holding all parties involved in any act of sexual violence accountable, and that they be prosecuted accordingly.’325 Similarly Bineta Diop in November 2012 notes in her statement when detailing the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo: ‘I saw for myself the degrading situation of women.’326 The civil society speaker from April 2013, Saran Keita Diakite provides an example of the way in which the concrete experience of the speaker serves to solidify the authority of the request or demand or recommendation made. In that statement, Diakite states that the NGO Working Group (and then goes on to use the collective ‘we’) welcomes a report of the Secretary-General in which the urgency of sexual violence in conflict is addressed and around

which subsequent recommendations built. In introducing this report Diakite establishes the authority (her own and that of the NGO Working Group it seems) to be staking these claims by stating: ‘the report also highlights the devastating impact of sexual violence in the conflict in my own country, Mali.’

The presence of the NGO Working Group is also felt in regards to the content of statements and the recommendations that they, for the most part, contain. The sheer number of specific issues crammed together in one statement and the use of previously agreed ‘advocacy language’ reminds the reader (audience) that these statements are made by/on behalf of the NGO Working Group as an ongoing advocacy presence at the UN. As has been noted elsewhere, and in my experience, these statements are not simply drafted by the woman speaking. Rather they are part of a practice whereby speakers are “typically briefed and their speeches written in collaboration with the NGO Working Group…. [with the] specifics of the particular country and its women’s activities …framed into a motivational and inspiring story.” Activists new to the international advocacy space are likely to trust the opinions of the group or may not feel confident to challenge their views – although this is certainly not always the case. In general, however, these dynamics of power mean that the statement will inevitably be the product of the group’s compromise amongst the desires of each member to see their ‘pet project’/focus issue or approach

328 Gibbings, 526. This practice is one I both observed and participated in (to a limited extent) during the time I worked at the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom and has been confirmed in my discussions with current member representatives in the NGO Working Group.
taken up in this rare opportunity to put forward an NGO position within a formal setting. There is also in their tone a consciousness of the perceived need to maintain the group’s own credibility within the UN.\textsuperscript{329}

From this, it seems then that to understand the production of the figure of the Woman-in-Conflict through these debates, we have to contend with another layer of representation and the positionality of those in this, not entirely fixed or monolithic, coalition – a group which, from an initial group engaged in the adoption of UNSCR 1325 had five members and, after a high point of sixteen now has now twelve institutional members (including mainstream human rights and humanitarian organizations).\textsuperscript{330} It is not possible here to work through this group’s positionality in the policy space nor do I want to construct the group as being wholly determinative of the content and form of the civil society statements. It is worth observing, however, that another layer of representation emerges and several practices are visible in the civil society statements that make evident the considerable presence and power of this formation.

\textsuperscript{329} See ibid. for similar concerns in relation to statements made at Arria Formula meetings – the off-the-record briefings by civil-society held by the Security Council.

\textsuperscript{330} The initial members of the NGO Working group were Amnesty International, Hague Appeal for Peace, Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children, International Alert and the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). In many ways the NGO Working Group was, at this point, fairly international in character. All but one of the organizations had offices in New York in order to be able to do advocacy at the UN’s headquarters there. International Alert, the London-based organization, had a research presence in several countries around the world and the work of Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children was also concerned with a multitude of geographically dispersed conflicts and refugee situations. Amnesty International and WILPF could, however, be seen as international or transnational organizations; each having membership and local “chapters” or “sections” in multiple countries. WILPF itself is described by Cockburn as a venerable, formal and widely recognized transnational network.
Although the NGO Working Group is well known in the UN policy community, and its coordinator is a highly visible figure, the names of its member organizations are fully listed in the version of the text that is circulated in hard copy to governments during the debate (although these are seldom included in the delivered version). This could be read as an attempt by the NGO Working Group to account for a shifting coalition or to display an extensive and inclusive constituency. But, it is also, according to some participants in statement drafting, done in an attempt to be very clear about who is not represented. It is a careful dance with the access and power the position of civil society allows. The logic here is that participation in debates meets the desire of governments to obtain the civil society ‘stamp of approval’ – a display of their compliance with the norm of consultation (the manufacturing of consent in service of hegemony?). If there is a claim to be speaking on behalf of some broad and amorphous ‘civil society’ then it can be claimed that all have participated and ‘consented’ in some way to the outcomes. Taking advantage of the access that satisfying this desire affords must be carefully balanced with the risk of being co-opted. The limits of consent must be outlined (through explicitly listing membership) without undermining that which gives one position in the first place (the authority of a broad constituency implied by the list’s length and breadth).

We see here another instance of the general and the specific in tension. The NGO Working Group is attempting to capture the credibility and authority of both the general breadth of the ‘represented groups’ and the specificity of the material and speaking presence of an individual woman and the ‘experience’ she brings. This sort
of negotiation between generality and specificity is one that is visible at different points in these statements and through them' it is mostly the experience of the embodied speaking woman that is positioned as bringing the specificity and support of “the real” to the generality of this coalition’s advocacy positions. And so again we circle back to the subject position of the speaker.

*Embodying the Woman-in-Conflict*

As already mentioned, who comes to occupy the position of speaker is already constrained by which countries the Security Council is willing to discuss. Furthermore, NGOs seem expected to carry the material cost of the speaker’s attendance in order to claim the privilege. Unsurprisingly, there is not usually much money available to fund extensive travel although individual member states have been known to specifically support such travel. Obtaining a US visa to attend the session carries with it its own costs and complications and is a reminder of US hegemonic control of ostensibly international spaces. The first port of call then is candidates who are in the US for some reason, either temporarily or in a more settled situation. While this course of action is understandable, by implication this person is often then already inserted into the circuit of global capital in a particularly privileged way. Many of the speakers do come directly from the Global South but these are primarily the indigenous but elite women upon whom the UN so often relies. That these are elite women can be read from their stated occupational identities. Several of the speakers are lawyers – at least one a practising magistrate. Several have, at different points in time, held senior positions in the UN bureaucracy or in their
national government (a reminder of the ease with which individuals in this area of policy move between sectors and thus adopt new subject positions). Others speak as founders and heads of national-level NGOs speaking from the experience of ‘their work’ and this fact too reveals a layer of representation by elites.

It may be that someone of the elite class will inevitably occupy the position of the Woman-in-Conflict at these debates. For a start, to be even minimally legible in the Security Council space requires this person be articulate in one of the five UN languages, (preferably English, which is the language that dominates at the UN’s New York headquarters). This linguistic capacity in many places implies a high degree of education and, from that, a particular class and status. Furthermore, the majority of the statements produce the UN as the preeminent actor in relation to peace and security and so the Woman-in-Conflict is also produced – particularly in the last five years – as a position that must be occupied by someone with a sophisticated grasp of the workings of the UN and its language and how these interact with the national context. This may be indicative of civil society having to develop and display in these statements a sophisticated knowledge of UN documents, processes and relationships. This gives them the ability to credibly and productively engage with the increasingly detailed and complex framework that has developed in the UN as the Women, Peace and Security agenda has matured and become linked to other agendas. The specificity of the institutional requests also indicates an awareness of the ease

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331 Something that may be particularly so for those in the Diaspora who are coded as authentic and credible but have been ‘proven’ legible to the West.
with which governments are able to ignore more general calls for support.

Furthermore, the content of the statements, particularly in the last 6 years, seem to reflect a keen awareness and involvement in UN institutional issues of the moment and campaigns of particular concern to UN-focused international NGOs in New York. The statements are used, for example, to elicit support for such calls such as the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security; support for the negotiation of an arms trade treaty; and for a new UN entity for women. While such claims are important it does take away from the statements functioning as the means by which the Security Council could come to better understand the lived experiences of women in war and what it is that they need and want.

The focus on UN institutional policy and structures may in part explain the presence of so many lawyers in the position of civil society speaker. The national legal system is a very visible point of contact for the policy of the UN and people in countries in which it operates. Being *au fait* with the workings of law as an institution is a position that allows the speaker to traverse the technicalities of the UN system and credibly link it to what is required nationally. But this sort of legibility and credibility concern is not the only thing driving the inevitable selection (by the NGO Working Group) of someone so placed. This may also be attributed to one of the key logics driving the Women, Peace and Security agenda and one that is evidence of the success of feminist interventions – that the Woman-in-Conflict should be understood as someone who is empowered and not simply a victim. Gibbings notes, and this
seems particularly true of the statements in the years immediately following 
UNSCR’s adoption, that the most valued narratives in the UN are those that are 
“positive, hopeful and future oriented.”\(^{332}\) However, the attempt to complicate and 
resist the victim narrative remains important in the civil-society statements. In fact, on 
more than one occasion these women make claims along the lines of those made in 
the 2009 statement that “[w]e women are not only victims in conflict, but agents for 
positive change.”\(^{333}\) By their occupation and organizational status, these individual 
women are coded as far from victims. However, this is diluted somewhat by the 
content of their statements. Whereas earlier statements – from 2004 to 2006 – are 
almost entirely focused on specific issues of the crisis from which they emerge and at 
times directly address the politics of that situation, their prominence is reduced in 
later years. The statements at the debate in 2015 may be indicative of another shift in 
that they were far more situation-specific and overtly political interventions that 
returned to messages of ending militarism with which advocacy for UNSCR began. 
However, on the whole the civil-society statements, even when they address and 
advocate specific political positions, do so in ways that comport with the UN’s 
diplomatic speech norms.\(^{334}\) There is, for example, on the part civil society but also 
state and UN representatives, an avoidance of what is seen as impolite or angry 
language or statements that might directly criticise particular governments.\(^{335}\) The

\(^{332}\) Gibbings, 527. also describes the norms requiring particular narratives of hope that were visible in the Women, Peace and Security community in the early 2000s. 
\(^{334}\) Gibbings. 
\(^{335}\) Ibid., 524.
experience of the speaking woman who is ‘empowered’ and ‘powerful’ remains in many cases one that channels the experience of anonymous victims in need of UN support or action – again setting up a negotiation between the general and specific and producing the Woman-in-Conflict embodied by the speaker in the role of supporting subordinate.

In what I have discussed here, I do not mean to portray these individual speakers as entirely lacking agency or to be what Spivak refers to as “the native-informant style subject of oral histories who is patronizingly considered incapable of strategy toward us’ (emphasis added). 336 Certainly there are those for whom this occasion to speak at the UN was a significant one that afforded the opportunity to meet directly with policymakers in government and the UN in service of their own goals. Nor is it necessarily an opportunity that is automatically accepted, as is evidenced by the comment of the 2015 civil society speaker Julienne Lusenge that she had to think ‘long and hard’ before taking up the offer. 337 But for each woman whose experience as speaker is a manifestation of personal agency, there is another moment of production of the subject position of the Woman-in-Conflict that looms larger than the individual. The embodied speaker is not simply a revelation of some ‘real’ beyond representation. Rather, there is an inevitability to representation here that is also deeply embedded in the practices of the Security Council’s Women, Peace and Security policymaking community.

336 Spivak, Death of a Discipline.
Chapter 6: Logics of Practice

The nature of the Security Council as an institution is such that there is no one predictable policymaking route that can be traced easily through time and space. CM, who like most other interviewees had done advocacy in other multilateral and national institutions before working at the Security Council, affirms that there are certain basic logics to advocacy:

the process of figuring out, here’s this body of decision makers, or here are these decision makers who I want to do something with and, who are the people who can influence them, that I knew, that is sort of the same everywhere; it’s just how does it apply to the Security Council.\textsuperscript{338}

But this is the trick of \textit{metis}. As a distinctive \textit{technē} it, “is concerned always with the production and effectiveness of knowledge within ‘a particular sphere of activity.’”\textsuperscript{339} The underlying organization or ‘structures’ of Security Council policymaking certainly seemed to be the starting point in the accounts of several of my interlocutors – at a basic level these are the limits contained in its mandate and agenda and its formal Rules of Procedure\textsuperscript{340} For many delegates requirements of the formal rules provide what is necessary in order to ensure intergovernmental interactions in the UN proceed smoothly. “It has to be,” remarked NT, “for example, it is one member one vote, it is very rigid and that is the way the system works, whether you are Syria or Norway or…you treat each other with respect, whether you

\textsuperscript{338} CM.
\textsuperscript{339} Karen Kopelson, "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning; or, the Performance of Neutrality (Re)Considered as a Composition Pedagogy for Student Resistance," \textit{College Composition and Communication} 55, no. 1 (2003): 130. DV @11
\textsuperscript{340} Schia, 140.
are this or that. It keeps things going.”\textsuperscript{341} However, equally important to understanding the dynamics of Council decision-making – and thus of interventions therein – are its working methods as these have developed in practice.\textsuperscript{342} For those outside of the P5, the Council’s working method “is set….a fait accompli.”\textsuperscript{343} But, NT pointed out, in discussing the benefits of the formal rules, “there is also a practice thing. You need to also know those rules in order to bend them and make your way through” or, as another government delegate remarked: “knowing when and how to play your cards becomes important”\textsuperscript{344}

\textit{Using the Rules of Practice}

CM’s response that engaging with or advocating in relation to a proposed resolution, “depends on who is running it’ is a determination that is, at one level, tied to whether the policy concerns an “Issue or a Country Situation”\textsuperscript{345} JS too noted that the way policymaking proceeds depend on this distinction. She explains, however, that this is, in turn, determined by how the Council’s work is divided in practice:

\begin{quote}
they nut out at the beginning of each calendar year who it is going to be. So they decide, for country situations, they usually have a lead and then a sub-lead, depending …for subsidiary bodies of the council they usually have a lead and then a sub-lead and then for country-situations it’s just a regular lead and for thematics it’s just a lead – which for our thematics – which are WPS and Sexual Violence in Conflict, the US has the lead on sexual violence in conflict and the United Kingdom has the lead on Women, Peace and Security – and that is every year. So they hold the pen, they have the institutional memory. And then on the country situations, its usually I think, for every
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{341} NT, interview by Sam Cook, 2014, New York.
\textsuperscript{342} Schia, 140.
\textsuperscript{343} Ibid., 144.
\textsuperscript{344} Interview NT. Ibid., 148.
\textsuperscript{345} CM.
country situation, except for Afghanistan, it’s one of the P3 members who holds the pen. Afghanistan it’s an elected member – a couple of years ago it was Germany, now its Australia and on subsidiary bodies you’ve got a lead and then a sub-lead or chair/co-chair – and that’s for counter-terrorism and conflict prevention in Africa and all that. But for the countries and for the thematics, it’s a straight up pen-holder.  

Understanding the scheme underlying the organization of work in the Council provides a basic outline of the process. Schia argues however, (and this seems in keeping with my earlier arguments) that formal structure can only be an initial anchor point: “it is difficult to understand organizations solely through a focus on structure, pretending that these exist independently of the actors that constitute the various positions in the structures.” For example, Smith emphasizes, while the process of drafting may, on each occasion, follow a general pattern, the ultimate identity of the state taking the lead on the drafting can be of crucial importance in decision-making, because the character and tone of the original proposal will to some extent set the stage for all future debate on the issue.

That it is Permanent Members of the Council (the UK and the USA) who, every year, take a lead both on the themes seen as most directly pertaining to WPS work serves to entrench and reinforce their influence over the shape of the WPS Agenda – “they hold the pen, they have the institutional memory.” With the addition of France, these two Member States in fact control the majority of resolution drafting in relation to the

346 JS.
347 Schia, 141.
349 See also Security Council Report and SC page on Working Methods.
Country situations under consideration. The process leading to a resolution in relation to these is, JS comments, “pretty straightforward.”

You’re going to have a mandate renewal and you're going to have a timetable – unless there's a crisis – like we did with South Sudan at the end of last year where there's basically the eruption of internal conflict and it was clear that the Council needed to act. And so, my understanding is that the penholder, upon taking advice from UN and experts will start to draft elements of a new document as needed. For a country situation they will consult with the host country. The consultations will be heavily influenced by the country report that will be due …. into the council usually a month before the mandate renewal is due and that is the one that gets put together by country teams.

The reporting cycles ...also vary, depending on the country situation. Sometimes they are every six months, sometimes they’re every month, sometimes they are every three months. But, there is usually a big annual report that is due in advance of the mandate renewal that is meant to inform the mandate renewal for the council. And that mandate renewal very much guides the council's deliberations. There are a lot of meetings with the host country, with any Friends of that Country situation and there's a lot of discussions about the flexibility, of how much the mandate is going to change, given conditions on the ground and the willingness of the host country (to either be bullied or not) for that mandate to change. 350

This understanding of the general ordering of the Council’s work and the elements it entails clearly underlies the logic of the NGO Working Group’s primary ongoing project the MAP – Monthly Action Points. Each month the group issues this “two page briefing note that provides analysis and advocacy entry points on country situations and thematic issues on the Security Council’s agenda for the forthcoming month.” 351 This regular practice is one that is part of a general attempt, as JS put it, “to get the Council to incorporate and live up to this obligation on women, peace and

350 JS.
351 NGOWG, Security Council Monthly Action Points (MAP) at http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/advocacy/map/
security in its daily work. “

That ‘daily work’ – its agenda – is organized into a monthly programme of work according to what reporting cycles, mandate renewals etc. fall within that month and including other matters which the presiding Member State takes as their prerogative to include. In setting out the specific asks of the group each month and in a public form, the NGO WG’s MAP is de facto a tool for monitoring the Council that implicitly recognizes its working methods: It highlights the entry points that are created by the regularities of practice within the Council’s working methods – anticipated reports, meetings or mandates--and, in relation to these, articulates the NGOWG’s recommendations or desired outcomes:

[...]

This is more than a mere restatement of structure or a presentation of information or data in a particular place. CM argues that it isn’t just a matter of presenting data: “data is one thing but data doesn't really mean anything unless you convert it into what specifically that means for [say] the resolution that they're putting...

352 JS.
353 Ibid.
on the DRC.” What is significant about the MAP is that it converts or translates those ‘facts’ into recommendations for action:

therefore, when I say to you ‘do something bout the women,’ what I means is when you’re adopting the resolution it must have a reference to 1325, it must say x, y or z. It must have an analysis, and here’s the analysis. So you’re sort of walking people through exactly what you mean.  

JS’s explanation of the project confirms this:

And then we say, okay, you're expected to discuss these things. When you do, here are the Women, Peace and Security concerns that you should expect information on in that report that you're receiving from the UN country team in Afghanistan. If you don't receive that information, you should ask why you're not receiving that information. You're going to be renewing the mandate on Afghanistan? Here are the key concerns. Here is what was missing from the last one. Here is what you should be continuing in this one that was in the last one.

These moments for potential action (asking questions or including language) remain in the future and thus provide an opening that feminist advocates then attempt to fill with elements drawn from outside the system:

Here are the core components of what is going on based on the expertise of Working Group members. So we have Human Rights Watch, we have Amnesty International. We have grass-roots organizations like Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, we have, the IANSA Women's network, we have Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS) and, drawing on the various expertise of those who are working in and living in the community (these communities that are affected by conflict), they're saying to us, these are what those concerns are. So we're able to bring those voices, amplify those voices and say, 'as you're talking about Afghanistan, this is what you need to be doing.  

354 CM.  
355 Ibid.  
356 JS.
Contending with Ambiguity

At one level, every moment of potential Security Council action is a potential space for intervention. As HM reflected,

that's how we started on the women, peace and security, right? Like every single country resolution, we need to make sure that they put something in there about women in conflict. Whatever it is. And it’s not outlandish because its set out in 1325 and they've said its relevant. So we could tell them every time, this is not an outlandish idea, you should just remember to put this in.\(^{357}\)

Policymaking in the Security Council can, at this level, seem straightforward and the entry points for advocacy clearly defined or at least determinable. Day-to-day policymaking, however, retains a high degree of unpredictability. Some of this can be ameliorated by “doing that homework” says LM and “figuring out if there’s a process. And so on WPS there’s a process, it’s moving from this to the other to the next, you know.”\(^{358}\) But, she suggests, those with relative power in the system are able to shift how that process is understood in furtherance of their individual interests:

I think for Women, Peace and Security right now, what I think is complicated is all the different processes because so many different actors want to take ownership. so countries have sprouted up with their...like the UK with their Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative that they have their experts on. Once it’s a winner, everybody ……[wants to have their name on it?] yeah.\(^{359}\)

This shift and increasing willingness to be seen as supporting particular WPS policy initiatives, does not, however, entirely account for a more general sense of uncertainty around Security Council policymaking. HM assessment was to say: “I do

\(^{357}\) HM.
\(^{359}\) CM.
think that it is varied and complex and often accidental.”

What particularly surprised her when she began working in the space, was “to find how random policy making is … especially on thematic areas.”

Even the renewal of existing peacekeeping mandates, which do follow a regular and predetermined schedule, can take unexpected directions. As HM puts it, “it can be as random as ‘well we’re going to do a mandate renewal for Somalia and there is a lot of coverage in the news right now because there have been a lot of attacks’ – it can be that random – that can suddenly lead to a particular focus or angle” within a mandate.

This is reflected too in LM’s response that how policy emerges in the Council is very organic and seems always to change: “Each negotiation is different so in a way it is hard to measure….It really does seem like a new project, a new engagement on different things every single time.”

JS’s response reflects a similar sense: “I don’t think I have all the pieces of the puzzle. I mean it depends on which document.” This sense of uncertainty is, in part, a testament to the unpredictability of global politics and events to which the Council is expected to respond and to the willingness of the Council to act – a willingness in turn dependent on the desires of its veto-holding members. However, the specific steps through which a particular text might emerge is also fraught with uncertainty.

As JS goes on to explain:

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360 HM.
361 Ibid.
362 Ibid.
363 LM.
What often happens is that P3 members will, the pen-holder, will lead and will start drafting text, often in consultation – well always in consultation with Capital – their own. P3 members will often have a discussion and discuss key elements together – agree things. And then it will either go to the P5 or it will get opened up to the full 15. And at any point in there – and all of these negotiations are closed, none of these negotiations are open to the public – they can be long and torturous or they can be relatively easy. And at some point in there, either with what is called the zero-draft (which is the first draft) or after the several drafts that follow after certain sets of negotiations – at some point in there a version will get leaked to NGOs – it will fall off the back of a truck, or various parts of the text will fall off the back of a truck. [so somebody might pass it to you and say ‘I didn’t give this to you, nobody should know I gave this to you but here it is?’] Yes and they will do that because you have a relationship already.

[or do you sometimes have to ask?]

Sometimes I ask if I really need it.\

Tools such as the MAP are, as a feminist intervention, only able to suggest potential pathways for policymakers rather than how such suggests make their way into action – although traces of these can be found in the texts of subsequent resolutions.

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364 JS.. Smith observes a similar unfolding of events “Once a delegation has a draft proposal that they would like to pursue, the first step is to quietly circulate it among their close friends and allies. Typically, this is done as the drafting process continues so that others’ reactions can be addressed in the text to ensure that the new proposal will have the basic endorsement of a key group of supporters. The new and improved draft proposal is then circulated to a larger group of interested parties, based on either regional affiliations or common interest groups. This process of consultation allows negotiations to get under way before public debate of specific proposals even begins.” Smith, 192. The process of actually writing a draft often involves an interactive exchange between a state’s UN mission and personnel in the foreign ministry back home. The degree to which the mission or ministry takes the lead depends on the perceived importance of the issue, and either of these parties may find it helpful to quietly consult members of the Secretariat for their knowledge of the language used in previous texts on the same issue. Other than a deadline for the submission of new proposals (called the ‘closing date’), there are relatively few restrictions on the freedom of delegations to submit draft resolutions in UN bodies. However, there are certain practices at the drafting stage that delegates can find helpful when it comes time to actually debate their proposals, such as drawing on language similar to that already approved in other UN bodies whenever possible.” Ibid.
However, the MAP is only one aspect of the work to ensure that the Council follows up on its obligation to make WPS concerns a priority in its day-to-day work. As JS explains:

we work at various levels of more private advocacy, under the radar advocacy, ….to do the more nuanced policy advocacy. So …. the Monthly Action Points goes out to anywhere from 2500 and 3000 contacts in a given month. It’s a good way to spark the conversation but it needs to be backed up by that private advocacy. \(^{365}\)

Amongst other things, this brief and generalized sketch suggests a key challenge attendant on accounting for feminist interventions (and indeed a key challenge for those interventions themselves). That is, in the Security Council (as in other UN bodies) “much of the negotiation process takes place in private and informal settings closed to all but those directly involved.” \(^{366}\) In the Security Council informal contacts are often a first step in the negotiating process – “designed to see if there is support for holding formal meetings on a particular topic” \(^{367}\) And, as a delegate in Schia’s study points out: “[s]imply calling delegates from other UNSC delegations or the lead country about a certain process was….an effective way of influencing a process even before it had actually been started.” \(^{368}\) This informality may account for the general neglect of political processes within the literature on the UN – or at least those that wish to generalize its forms. As Smith points out:

\[^{365}\] JS.
\[^{366}\] Smith, 224.
\[^{367}\] Ibid., 233.
\[^{368}\] Schia, 142.
‘behind-the-scenes’ negotiations provided a catalyst for the formal decisions that were made.\textsuperscript{369}

The “private negotiations and informal consultations” that make these ‘behind-the-scenes’ moments possible are not new to the UN. They have, however, greatly proliferated with the increasing volume of Council policymaking and, as the break in the binary dynamics of the cold war has “opened the door to new avenues of coalition building, a process that is clearly facilitated by informal contacts among delegates.”\textsuperscript{370} Their frequent use in/by the Security Council is particularly critiqued in that the lack of transparency entrenches the already hegemonic power of the P5 in the critical area of international peace and security.\textsuperscript{371} This control is further entrenched by the fact that the delegates from these states are better able to “learn, master, and define the game and skills needed in the informal processes.”\textsuperscript{372} But this space beyond the formal process is also one with political potential – including for feminist policy advocates.

\textsuperscript{369} Smith, 224.
\textsuperscript{370} Ibid. Informal consultations are of course hard to define and categorize but Smith has distinguished between four types – informal consultations of the whole, of a subset of members, between council members and non-members and other actors and those conducted by the Council president. “they are used to address all types of issues on the Council’s agenda, from peacekeeping reports to sanctions updates to briefings by special representatives of the secretary-general. The degree to which non-members of the Council are briefed on the work conducted in ‘consultations of the whole’ varies according to which member holds the presidency in any given month; however, recent practice holds that these briefings occur on a daily basis when ‘consultations of the whole are used and that the draft resolutions under consideration in these informal consultations should be made available to all member states.” Ibid., 240.
\textsuperscript{371} See the discussion in ibid., 238.
\textsuperscript{372} Schia, 149.
As Schia argues, the “interrelation between the formal structures and the informal processes” of the Security Council produces a level of flexibility in the institution. This ‘plasticity’ – a term Schia borrows from neuroscience – is what allows the Council to confront the dilemma of its legitimacy depending simultaneously on “the maintenance of the original purpose set out in the UN Charter and the Council’s Rules of Procedure,” and its “continued relevance in an every-changing world.” This informality, and thus ambiguity, of process is one that, Smith points out, those outside the system can use to effect change:

for they can allow individuals an opportunity to shape the negotiations in a substantial way, giving certain actors (like small states and NGOs) avenues of influence they otherwise would have lacked and indicating that they are considered part of the ‘in-group’ whose contributions are desired in regard to the issue at hand.

For outsiders, access to these processes or their attendant texts (such as to allow direct comment or critique) is possible only by relying on these behind-the-scenes moments and on relationships (even if not direct) with those who do have access. As CM explains:

I mean if I was really really interested in a resolution and I didn't know I would call the people I know on the Council – like the missions I have a good relationship to and I would say 'who is running this resolution' and they'll say 'oh its Turkey' and I'll say 'oh, who should I talk to at Turkey? And then they would give me the name of the person at Turkey and maybe they would say 'are you interested in this?' and I would say 'I'm really interested, is there a possibility of seeing it – like a zero draft or when it comes out? And they're like 'I don't know if this is possible, I'll call the person from Turkey, I'll try to

373 Ibid., 144.
374 Hurd 1999, 383 per ibid.
375 Smith, 234.
376 This is an insider status that does not come without ethical challenges for those whose constituencies are based on notions of inclusivity and democratic accountability.
set up a meeting, I'll ask them what the components are of the thing, I’ll tell them what I think the components should be and I'll dig around and see if it’s possible to get a draft.” And sometimes it’s possible and sometimes it isn't and sometimes other NGOs have better relations and will get a draft before you do.  

From LM’s perspective then, policymaking,

happens basically happens in a cycle of conversations. sometimes you are privy to them and sometimes you're privy to some but you know the main conversation has already happened, in capitol you know.  

**Enacting Metis**

Although fraught with ethical challenges (produced by the counter-pull towards transparency to a broader feminist community) it is in the gaps or moments of ambiguity (in the document’s formation) that feminist policy advocates must operate. LM’s description of the process is a reminder of the relations of power in that space and how these structure and are shaped by the formalities of international law and the state system. Sometimes the knowing comes too late and in a place removed from range – here signalled by the words ‘in capital’ – (a spatial shorthand to cite national level instructions and a reminder of the system of sovereignty that pulls against the imagined collective of the UN). This then, is the moment and place – the space – of metis. As Bjola and Kornprobst explain, metis is precisely that which enables actors to seize moments of openness as “windows of opportunity” and to “not lose orientation when a community experiences situational difficulties in interpreting

377 CM,
378 LM Interview
the world.” Similarly Kopelson sees metis, in Detienne and Vernant’s interpretation as:

*a techne* of ‘cunning tricks and strategems’ that (quite like rhetoric itself) arises within and is particularly well suited to respond to situations of chance or indeterminancy.\(^{380}\)

Indeed, the *metis*-laden occupations (such as those set out earlier) are, Scott argues, skills that “require constant adjustments and finely tuned reactions to an environment that cannot simply be controlled or engineered.”\(^{381}\) Rather, they argue, these actors (i.e. those possessed of *metis*) “understand these indeterminacies as chances for changing the world” – chances that they have to “spell out the crisis of pre-established meaning that actors are confronted with in a particular situation.”\(^{382}\) This is the point at which, Laclau and Mouffe argue, politics is produced – when societal conflicts or social antagonisms expose the vulnerability or ‘discursive exterior’ or limit of a discourse.\(^{383}\) In the Security Council context, having ‘sight’ of, or access to, what will become the policy text is only the initial point for intervention. This is also the point at which advocates need to ‘make use of’ the space that access opens:

So you reach out to the people you think might be also interested in this thematic resolution and maybe they have something – you see if they have a process going of giving joint comments, you know because the more civil society is coordinated, the more it’s heard. That's one of those things – diplomats don't like to …it’s not that they don't like to think...I'll be fair....a lot

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379 Bjola and Kornprobst, 126.
380 Kopelson, 130fn.2.
381 Scott, 75. *Metis* then “represents the kind of practical skills acquired in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment.”
382 Ibid.; Bjola and Kornprobst, 126.
383 Laclau and Mouffe, 125.
of them are incredibly overworked. So a lot of them like it chewed out as much as possible – they would rather not have to do the research about what’s, you know previously agreed language, whether this has ever come up before. You need to know whether you are proposing is totally outlandish or something that's already been done five times before and they just actually need to know how to put it in here.”

From this perspective, *metis* appears as a ‘power,’ something of which actors are possessed: the ‘know how’ and ‘acquired experience’ to see openings and turn them into opportunities. This does not, however, necessitate a return to a purely agential account of action. De Certeau in fact rejects approaches that would reduce practices to the actions of atomistic individuals with static, pre-formed interests or ideas who operate according to dominant Western models of reason and rationality. He argues that it is essential that the enquiry focus on practices of use as “modes of operation or schemata of action” rather than directly on individual actions or “the subjects (or persons) who are their authors.” As he puts it:

> [a]nalysis shows that a relation (always social) determines its [the individual’s] terms, and not the reverse, and that each individual is a locus in which an incoherent (and often contradictory) plurality of such relational determinations interact.

He reminds us that these ways of operating don’t merely designate what might form the object of study but also organize its construction. In order to undertake an enquiry into practices of use, “[in] order to think them,” as De Certeau puts it,

one must suppose that to these ways of operating correspond a finite number of procedures (invention is not unlimited and, like improvisations on the piano

[384] CM.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid., 77.
or on the guitar, it presupposes the knowledge and application of codes), and
that they imply a logic of the operation of actions relative to types of
situations.  

Thus, the procedures allowing the re-use of products are linked together in a
kind of obligatory language, and their functioning is related to social situations and
the way power operates in those at a moment in time.  

Knowledge of these limits –
learned through interacting with them – is itself part of metis.  
Recognizing a set of
factors – a particular social constellation – and to intervene therein is to enact a way
of operating that requires, in the present case, knowing and applying the codes of the
Security Council’s WPS policy space.

It is in these ‘improvisations’ – these creative articulations of the codes – that
metis can be found. For the most part, Bjola and Kornprobst note, “these
opportunities themselves are none of their doing. The indeterminacies appear mainly
because of external circumstances, for example an exogenous shock” or, what Laclau
and Mouffe might term the “dislocatory force” of unexpected events.  
But, as they
point out, the social antagonisms through which politics are produced in these
moments, do not come about simply as a result of a happening but,

because social agents are [as a result thereof] unable to attain their identities
(and therefore their interests), and because they (broadly speaking) construct
an ‘enemy’ who is deemed responsible for this ‘failure.’

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388 Ibid., 21; ibid., xviii.
389 Ibid., xvii.
390 Bjola and Kornprobst, 125.
392 Howarth, 105; Laclau and Mouffe, 125.
They are thus faced with an opportunity to construct particular chains of meaning in order to shift political frontiers and, in so doing, attempt to reconstitute the discursive field.\textsuperscript{393}

\textit{Tactics and Strategies}

To capture these moments not in their static singularity but as ‘ways of using’ that obey their own logic, De Certeau suggests a distinction between modes of action that are strategic and those that are tactical.\textsuperscript{394} The former, available to subjects of “will and power” is one that “assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper (proper) and thus serves as the basis for generating relations with an exterior distinct from it.”\textsuperscript{395} It represents a type of knowledge that is, “sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one’s own place.”\textsuperscript{396} In relation to Security Council policymaking, this place of strategy is, at a formal level, one only available to Council members and, perhaps more accurately, only to the P5.\textsuperscript{397} However, the ability to command institutional resources allows even those without a formal place able to engage substantively across a wide terrain. HM posed the question for example:

so then, why is the Council obsessed with sexual violence and not women's leadership? There are so many reasons and let’s remember, it is Council policy that they should be focusing on women's leadership...so there's a

\textsuperscript{393} Torfing, 82.
\textsuperscript{394} de Certeau, xiv.
\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., xix, 35-6.
\textsuperscript{396} Ibid. As De Certeau frames it “a certain power is the precondition of this knowledge and not merely its effect or its attribute. It makes this knowledge possible and at the same time determines its characteristics.”
\textsuperscript{397} Schia.
question of policymaking and policy doing of course. …but at one level I think it literally is because the Office of the SRSG on Sexual Violence has a staff of ten or fifteen whose only job is to lobby member states. that is all they do. They don't work on country-[specific UN] work, UN Action on Sexual Violence deals with the UN. All they do is lobby member states. Which is why you need to talk to TX. That's his main job..to go around and lobby member states, and pester them. He does it on every single resolution. ….this is what you need to know. Every month.398

The NGO Working Group on the other hand, is in a far different position and only just able to cover the five to seven country situations in their MAP:

there’s no capacity in the office, even in the working group writ large, to do that kind of concerted advocacy in the council with those members. When that happens, when that kind of advocacy happens, it is either around a really major renewal, like WG members did that on Afghanistan, or we've done that around Libya, or when we've really done it is when we've brought our Women’s Human Rights Defenders to New York. So we really did that around Libya. and Libya was really important because that was one of the first, that was when they were setting up the mission – so for a new mission.399

However, this position – of being without the ‘power’ to shift the game, is the tactical position – action in the “space of the other.”400 As much as a strategy is organized “by the postulation of power,” a tactic is determined by the absence of a proper locus.401

A tactic,

insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance. It has at its disposal no base where it can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances.”

398 Beyond the ability of this institutional actor to be constantly present, the form of their intervention is to provide their input in the form already accepted in the system:

“his great success is that he gets all this in the first draft [oh, wow] if it’s not in the first draft, you know what that means. well you just can't, actually. you can't. 399 JS.

400 de Certeau, 37.Whereas strategy might be thought of as the ‘logic of power,’ tactics are the ‘logic of circumvention.’ Hugo; Statler Letiche, Matt, "Evoking Metis: Questioning the Logics of Change, Responsiveness, Meaning and Action in Organizations," Culture and Organization 11, no. 1 (2005): 10.
401 de Certeau, 37; ibid., xi.
Whereas strategies might impose totalizing discourses, a tactic “must play on and with the terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power,” in “isolated actions, blow by blow.” The “great success” of the office of the SRSG, says HM, is that staff like TX get “all this [language] in the first draft” of every country-specific resolutions. As she goes on to explain: “if it’s not in the first draft, you know what that means, well you just can’t, actually. You can’t.” A tactic, De Certeau explains,

depends on time – it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized ‘on the wing.’ Whatever it wins, it does not keep. It must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities.’

The logic of these tactics – of ways of operating on another’s ground – argues De Certeau, can be thought of as akin to the logics of rhetoric and of the storyteller and, these he posits, are the ways of metis. Thus to tell of these tactics is to tell (of) metis. In Detienne and Vernant’s telling, he points out, there are three elements that differentiate metis “more clearly from other sorts of behaviour” and as “characteristic of the stories that tell about it.” These elements are, he argues, “constituted by three

402 Ibid., 37.
403 HM.
404 “The weak must continually turn to their own ends forces alien to them. This is achieved in the propitious moments when they are able to combine heterogeneous elements (thus in the supermarket, the housewife confronts heterogeneous and mobile data – what she has in the refrigerator, the tastes, appetites, and moods of her guests, the best buys and their possible combinations with what she already has on hand at home, etc.); the intellectual synthesis of these given elements takes the form, however, not of a discourse, but of the decision itself, the act and manner in which the opportunity is ‘seized.’” de Certeau, xix.
405 Ibid., 81.
relations of metis, to the ‘situation,’ to disguise, and to a paradoxical invisibility.”

In what remains of this chapter I work through various accounts of policymaking intervention in terms of the first of these two elements, returning to the last in my final chapter – Telling Relations: Holding Space.

Disguise: In the Place of Another

Having no proper place in the system, feminist WPS advocates rely on the practices of policymaking as they exist. But this playing “on the place of the other” extends to other levels. The effectiveness of metis is that it is fully contextual and, Detienne and Vernant note, “willingly operates through reversal, deception, and disguise when necessary.” It does not, Kopelson suggests, “concern itself with ‘true being’ or ‘unchanging essences.’” In fact, she goes on to say, “one possessed of métis “takes the form” required “to deal with whatever comes up” in “circumstances of conflict” and amidst “the difficulties of practical life with all its risks.” Described as being particularly useful in the face of “forces too powerful to be controlled directly but which can be exploited despite themselves without ever being confronted head on.” It is thus, Dettiene and Vernant argue:

often associated with the camouflaging or polymorphic capabilities of various animals who blend with and adapt to their surroundings for survival (159–61) and also with gods and even mortal figures in Greek mythology who “master” the natural elements only by working within rather than against them, and/or by possessing the very qualities of the elemental forces themselves.

406 Ibid.
407 Kopelson, 132. per Detienne, 3,21,44.
408 Kopelson, 132.
409 Ibid.
410 Ibid.
The ability to blend in and take on the form of that which surrounds them is important to individual advocates. CM suggests that critical to successful advocacy is that individuals attempting to enter this space be relatable. Not only briefable and good at relationship building, but “likeable” and “physically relatable” which, she notes, unfortunately matters a great deal:

Somebody who can go into a room and look like the enemy. This is what they always said in the coalition on the ICC 'dress like the enemy' and it really is, everybody can dress like the enemy, anybody can. I’ve seen people try to do advocacy with a lot of piercings, visible tattoos, hair in weird colours...it doesn't really work. You have to be incredibly good. You have to be so good and you have to get there before you start looking weird. It really is that you have to just dress like the enemy.

What lies behind this is a desire to be heard:

They can relate to you. Right? Here’s a person. I understand this person. This person is not trying to change too much. This is where the fear is. This person is wearing a suit. This person is one of my people. So maybe I should listen. And then you have to ...somebody has to be able to distill, they have to be able to figure out very fast, like read the cues of somebody else – what are they trying to...what is it that they need from me. People will tell you that ...you can't go into a meeting with your advocacy agenda and go through your points robotically. You have to listen to what that person wants and needs from you and you have to be able to anticipate so that you have that information.⁴¹¹

For CM, advocacy generally begins with listening and then, essentially “giving everybody what they need” while advancing her own ends.⁴¹² With limited resources, those who are essentially “non-convincibles” do not figure into her plans and I can

⁴¹¹ CM.
⁴¹² Ibid.
think of few NGO colleagues who would dispute this basic approach. Amongst those
who are considered convincible are then, “the clueless, the spineless and the
penniless.” The first of those, the ‘clueless:’ are those who don’t have the
information: “they don’t actually know that they should be doing this thing and that
this is the right thing to do.” But she cautions against assuming that this is the
majority of people:

I think people need information about what they can do about it but I don’t
think they need information about sh*t happening, because I think they
already know. Did the security council not know before, did the diplomats not
know that sexual violence was happening and that women were not
participating? Really? They didn't know that?….people are not that dumb, you
know. Maybe they didn't know what to do about it and that is, maybe that is
the clue they need."\(^{413}\)

Of the remaining categories, the penniless lack (or claim to lack) resources
and the spineless are “scared of what will happen.” People will “change what they
do,” she posits because “they change their opinion on something or are convinced
they need to do something because of power changing – so they think they can get
more power or they will lose it if they don’t act.” Identifying the specific pressure
points of those with relative power in the situation and convincing them to act based
on their own interests is a tactical approach:

it is also about kind of knowing where the room is, for what is possible and
what is impossible and then trying to push it. So [you need] a political sense
of who wants what in the room and after a while you kind of know it, you
know the reactions and it is about trying to avoid those poisonous terms and
finding alternative ways and that can take a bit of creativity sometimes.\(^{414}\)

\(^{413}\) Ibid.
\(^{414}\) BN.
Amongst member states, for example, says HM “there is a huge amount of attention to the optics of collaboration” in the UN and in particular in respect of the relationship between the Western states and those from the Global South:

I do think with 1820 and with sexual violence in general, it was extremely important to have the Ghanaian Ambassador – former security council member, he had just come off in December 2007 …. who was very active in the peacebuilding commission. He took a lead role in the sexual violence conversation and in 1820. …..He was really vocal and active with the other council members – pushing them to do something. And of course it was important for them to be seen to working with an African leader on this. So I think the optics are important. 415

This desire to be seen in a particular relationship to issues or other actors in the space is something that CM marked out as one of the primary pivots in persuading government representatives to a different way of thinking:

you give them coverage – right. You’re like, ‘okay if you do this then I'll say that I did this other thing. Sometimes it’s that blatant. You’re giving people cover to do something. And sometimes it’s like you’re doing the opposite right, saying ’if you're not doing this I cannot go tell my constituency that I think you're a good guy. [you don't get the civil society stamp of approval?] yeah and to some countries that is incredibly important. They want you to say that they are okay.” 416

415 HM. 416 CM.
This desire for the approval of civil society is one that differently placed feminists are able to leverage to good effect in their version of the “good cop, bad cop thing” where, says HM:

of course I am within the UN so I have to be good but the NGO WG, Peacewomen can be much more critical. And I have definitely worked closely with JS in particular on encouraging her to write sort of critical letters about certain things. I can’t remember any particular one right now. So where we would be there with Member States saying 'oh you've been criticized, well here's some information that would be useful etc.”

Within an environment where individuals primarily function as representatives of an abstract legal subject, the interests of those individuals – and their place in the internal structures within which they operate – also have to be taken into account. The power of individuals in the Security Council and the UN environment more generally is, in fact, what LM found most surprising on starting to work there:

not only about the council but generally about work here, how much individuals matter. I would never have understood about something like the Security council… [for example] whether you have an Arria on Syria depends on how you can work with the UK expert, you know, if that's going to happen or not. If you've someone who isn't…..it’s not going to happen, it literally won't get going. They won't even go up their ranks [for it] to be decided.

CM agreed and in response to my question of whether it makes a difference who the people are in a particular mission at a moment in time, responded affirmatively:

Yes. all the time. Because these are people who will ask for resources. they are people you can, if people have a personal interest, they really want to see something pushed through. or if they are just …I want to say decent, honest

417 HM.
418 Within negotiations, Schia argues that the internal structures of state missions to the UN have a significant effect on the ability of those states to influence outcomes.
people but there are decent honest people who are not doing things and there are people who are motivated by their own career advancement who are doing great stuff. So it’s not so much that. But there is sort of a sense of like, if this person wants to do something, ….for example, this particular government is no longer prioritizing LGBT issues as much as they used to but this particular diplomat is very committed and so passes the information and …wants to brainstorm about how to move this forward even if they can't do very much. So I think it really matters.\textsuperscript{419}

For the SRSGs office, for example, the success of ‘getting language in’ to Security Council policy is that their input is made to fit the outcome:

He sends text, draft text to the penholder …….the Somalia Penholder I think is UK and Mali is definitely France. He sends them text, four or five paragraphs that they can chunk straight into the draft resolution. [and mostly previously agreed language?] of course, he's got standard stuff and of course he also has staff with him who do work on the country so they have updated information, which then makes the staff member in the mission look fabulous because they are putting this in. It is pre-drafted so it is perfect to just slot in….. unlike the MAPs The MAPs are just short brief and general suggestions...this is language – it’s a cheat sheet – you can use it. And they do, they just chunk the language straight in like jigsaw puzzles fitting in.\textsuperscript{420}

And what allows those contributions of specific text to be accepted is that they are recognized within the system. Says CM:

you have to use language that in some way has been vetted, right. That in some way is somewhere in the UN system where they can hear it. So, [rather than putting in say the word ‘heteronormativity’] say ‘inequality between people, between men and women, and move on from there. Stereotyping is a huge thing, intersectionality between the different types of discrimination, discriminatory stereotyping. … etc. So that to me, that gets at heteronormativity. And you have to use a whole bunch of other words but people can hear it.\textsuperscript{421}

“I mean with the Security Council,” says CM:

\textsuperscript{419} CM. \\
\textsuperscript{420} HM. \\
\textsuperscript{421} CM.
what they care about is – the mandate is International peace and security – not that they necessarily care about that – but on the surface that's what they care about. so you have to relate it to that. So figure out what it is, what's there.

[it’s like you have some building blocks and it’s up to you to build the castle?] yeah and then there's the lucky breaks

**Relationship to the Situation**

The relationship of metis to the situation, as De Certeau frames it, is that metis counts and plays on the right point in time (kairos): it is a temporal practice.” The right moment for an action, the ‘occasion’ as De Certeau terms it, is a nexus critical to the success of everyday practices – to what it is to enact metis. Jo Becker, in *Campaigning for Justice: Human Rights Advocacy in Practice*, notes the importance of “strategic timing and the value of ‘opportunistic advocacy’” as one of the main themes emerging from her exploration of the strategies behind a diverse range of recent innovative human rights campaigns. Many of the successful efforts she documents, like several feminist interventions in the Security Council space, “might not have been possible under other circumstances.” It is, however, impossible to

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422 Ibid.
423 de Certeau.
424 Ibid., 83.
426 Becker notes, for example, the political transformation following the civil war in Nepal that “allowed the LGBT movement to participate in the political process as Nepal transitioned…[to run] for seats in the constituent assembly and [to provide] input for the country’s new constitution.” In the efforts to bring Liberian leader Charles Taylor to justice for human rights abuses in Sierra Leone, what proved to be a decisive opportunity for the campaign was “the confluence of a visit by Nigerian President Obasanjo to the United States with the unexpected disappearance of Taylor from his Nigerian villa.” In that case advocates seized the opportunity by pushing US officials to refuse a meeting between the two until
define in advance what ‘the occasion’ or ‘moment of opportunity’ will be that sees the effort succeed. These decisive moments may not appear as such, may in fact only become so in the moment where the telling begins. As De Certeau puts it “because it can be isolated neither from a conjuncture nor from an operation,” the occasion “constantly eludes attempts to define it.” It is, he argues, “a fact that cannot be detached from the ‘turn’ or ‘trick’ that produces it, because each time it is inserted in a sequence of elements, it distorts their relationships.”

If we explore CM’s narrative of 1889 as she goes on to tell it, it becomes clear that the ‘lucky break’ she identifies is one constructed out of the positions and dynamics of power in the Council in that moment, including Vietnam holding the presidency of the Security Council in October 2009:

[w]ith 1889, with Vietnam, they came right after the US. The US had had the presidency during September so Hillary Clinton was there so she had presided over the session on Women, Peace and Security. So then when it came up in October – oh and there was a resolution that came out of that [in September] – and so in October for Vietnam, of course there had to be something on Women, Peace and Security in October.

S: Vietnam felt the pressure?

Obasanjo “agreed to find Taylor and hand him over for trial by the Special Court for Sierra Leone.” Taylor was found and handed over shortly thereafter by Liberian officials. Other examples mentioned by Becker were built on shifts in governments and ‘states’ interests – the negotiation of the ILO domestic worker convention was said to be aided by “the strong positions taken by the Department of Labor under the new Obama administration” and the final negotiations of the child soldiers optional protocol bolstered by the brief time in power in Germany of the Greens. Ibid., 249-50.

427 de Certeau, 83.
428 Ibid., 83-4.
429 CM.
At first glance there may be little in this account that explains why this is a moment of opportunity and why I immediately asked if that set of circumstances caused Vietnam to feel pressured. To appreciate this requires situating it in the context or relations of power of the WPS policy space at that moment and understanding any singular WPS policy intervention as being part of a wider dynamic than one particular resolution or issue and as taking place on the grounds of what went before. CM begins her account not with Vietnam’s national interests or desires in terms of policy outcomes but rather with the fact of the US having held the Council presidency in September 2009 and, having used that opportunity to adopt a resolution – SCR 1888 on sexual violence in conflict (a follow up to SCR 1820 adopted in June of the preceding year). That it was October meant that “of course there had to so something on women, peace and security” – the Open Debate and other activities in this month having become, by practice, focused on WPS. The pressure point, that transformed this set of circumstances into an ‘event’ came in the form of then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton having presided over the adoption of that Resolution in September. There are any number of reasons this might have been the case: it was the first US Council presidency under the newly elected Obama administration and it wanted to signal the importance of the occasion; perhaps her attendance was part of the high-level representation common at the UN during the General Assembly’s annual opening session; perhaps because Clinton had long been a high-profile supporter of women’s rights issues; and/or perhaps because the US wanted to signal the seriousness with which they take the issue of sexual violence in conflict.
Vietnam took up the Council presidency, in October and were thus pegged to preside over a Security Council Open Debate on WPS, the value of particular status symbols in that space became, at least in retrospect, a point of leverage for advocates:

yes, they were like, they wanted their foreign minister [to preside] also but you couldn't have their foreign minister without also having a resolution – so if they had to have a resolution it had to be actionable. We kept on sort of like ..'this looks like a press statement or a presidential statement’ (or whatever they had), it has to have something actionable.  

And that, says CM, is “how we moved from [a focus on] sexual violence to women’s participation. … it was the one-upmanship between Hillary Clinton and Vietnam’s foreign minister.”  

Metis, according to Kopelson involves _mastery over time_ – “an ability, that is, not simply to seize the moment but to seize it with forethought, preparedness, and thus with _foresight_ as to how events should unfold.”  

As Becker notes, however, advocates “can take steps to make sure that they are prepared to maximize their potential when they do.”  

In each of the cases she documents, unexpected events became opportunities because past efforts allowed them to be built into ‘crisis moments.’ This dynamic is evident in the account given by LM of a resolution that would, in terms of its specific content and breadth of coverage, come to be described, from a feminist perspective, as one of the most

430 Ibid.
431 Ibid.
432 Kopelson. Detienne, 16-27.
433 Those advocating for Charles Taylor’s release had campaigned for years to get US lawmakers to go on record calling for Taylor to stand trial. Similarly, the families of massacred prisoners in Libya had for years used all available points of leverage to “keep the issue alive and to force the government to confront their demands.” Becker, 251.
434 Ibid., 151.
impressive WPS resolutions adopted. It is a resolution that, before it was formally proposed within the Council was conceived of in a meeting at UN Women with LM, the NGO WG coordinator, the working-level representatives from the US, France and the UK (P3) and representatives from the office of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC) where, she says: “everyone just laid it out. It was a serious discussion about what could be in it.”

But, the story begins elsewhere and before it was even conceived of as a possibility, at a time when WPS advocates had “no strategy in place to get it.” LM explains thus:

So someone has decided, like [resolution] 2106, the initiation of 2106, how I learned about it, maybe I’ll say it that way, was early and we – the US rep at the time called me and we were meeting and [in the course of that she said], ‘oh by the way, we’re thinking of a resolution pushed by the SRSGs office, what do you think?’

Contained in this moment, put forward as an explanation of something being ‘already decided,’ is a recognition that it remains the purview of Members of the Security Council to ‘decide’ and formally initiate policy. But it also suggests that their practice of so doing is shaped in relationship to ‘outside’ actors. As suggested earlier, the opportunity, the availability of the right moment, is often reliant on these relationships and one’s position and identity in them. In this case, for example, the resolution that was to become SCR 2106 was initiated and advocated for by the office

435 LM.  
436 Ibid.  
437 Ibid.
of the Special Representative to the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict (SRSG-SVC); the implication that they approached the US for support is an indication that they are cognizant of its position as the Permanent Member who has taken the lead on the issue in the past. Without a formal place in the policy process, this office too must play on the position of those who do. The influence of the SRSG in initiating such a resolution cannot be reduced to the office’s place in the formal hierarchy of the state system or of the UN bureaucracy. These things certainly matter. No doubt that the SRSG office is part of the UN, and thus at some level controlled by States, makes its requests more acceptable and legible than a proposal by an outsider like an NGO. The status of the SRSGs office within the UN and the popularity of its work with Member States also brings it considerable resources that again considerably extend its reach and effectiveness. But, emphasised LM, as important are elements that cannot be accounted for in the system itself: “the staff in their office, the people they have in the team really matter – really really matter. I think who the individuals are matters, sometimes the most” not only in terms of their expertise and the relationships they build but also, LM emphasized, in terms of “what their aims are.” “I think,” she went on, “one individual in the SRSGs office can initiate a resolution. And I think if they are strong and they are senior and they say, ‘you know, we need a resolution on this’ and it is heard and then they do all the bizillion steps that have to happen, you know I’m not saying that the [expression of desire] results in the resolution but it can initiate it.”

438 The influence of individuals in

438 Ibid.
such incredibly powerful positions can feel most disturbing when their aims are ones
at odds with one’s own or -- as was the case here -- felt by WPS advocates to not be
in the interests of some broader and more feminist WPS agenda. On learning of the
resolution proposed in this case, “my first reaction was,” says LM:

this is a terrible idea.’ This will be the fourth resolution on sexual violence
and it will [derail] the agenda completely. There is a proliferation of
resolutions. The last one hasn’t even been started to be implemented. It was
unclear what the concrete aspects could be.439

But whether or not a resolution seems ‘helpful’ in the view of feminist
advocates can be quite beside the point, particularly if powerful Member States have
decided it is a thing they desire. At around the time that this was happening, LM
explains, there was a jockeying for position “a kind of back and forth between the US
and the UK….a little bit of ‘machoing’ as to who is going to take the lead [on the
resolution].” The UK government had just launched its own initiative on ending
sexual violence in Conflict and taken the opportunity to host an Open Debate on the
topic when they held the Council presidency that year. But, the US, having introduced
and led the negotiation of all preceding resolutions on the issue “wanted to be the
leader.”440 LM’s story goes on to give a sense of the pressure on feminist advocates to
scramble and respond to the apparently foregone conclusion of a resolution.

Following the initiation of the conversation by the US mission’s ‘women, peace and
security’ focused representative, LM and the coordinator of the NGO Working
Group:

439 Ibid.
440 Ibid.
met her [the US representative’s] senior person here at the mission…. you know this was before UN women even knew, before any UN agency even knew – and they should have been consulted obviously but they hadn’t, – and mostly before other missions knew. And she said, ‘you know, Washington needs to know the position.’ So we expressed our deep concern over the issues. and then we met the SRSGs office and said, you know, 'what's the story' and then, oh gosh, there were all these convenings and meetings. So we went to UN Women and we said, 'there's a resolution being drafted do you know anything about it?' ‘No we haven't heard' and we said, 'this is a big problem.'”

“So,” said LM, “basically I remember talking to HM [situated inside the UN] and saying, 'our fear at this point in the agenda was that if there was another resolution it would solidify sexual violence on the Security Council agenda and push off the rest of the items.” When faced with such a situation, those possessed of metis, according to Detienne and Vernant:

engage in ‘weighty reflection’ about consequences, never attending only to ‘the immediate present’ but ‘taking the widest point of view’ and using the wisdom of experience to consider long-term advantages and disadvantages of any course of action. In fact, they continue, metis is especially useful “to reverse an unfavourable situation.” Faced with the almost inevitable adoption of yet another resolution on sexual violence, LM continued,

we worked the SRSGs office, and the SRSGs office said, ‘let’s not say no to this resolution based on that. Let’s look to putting in the recommendations for something else and we would potentially support you getting another resolution – which ended up being 2122.”

441 Ibid.  
442 Ibid.  
443 Kopelson, 132.  
444 Ibid.  
445 LM.
In this case, feminist activists pushing for a more balanced WPS agenda were able to leverage the SRSG’s office’s desire for a resolution on sexual violence into support for a future resolution on mediation and peacebuilding – Resolution 2122 – only a few months later. Says LM: “we never would have got 2122 without 2106 I think simply because there was no strategy in place to get it.”\textsuperscript{446} It was not that those in the WPS community had not considered the elements needed to enforce the Council’s commitments in this area but, LM explained, “we hadn't proactively said, this October” and having to scramble to get the details for that in place in time meant that ultimately, “2106 forced the other aspects of the agenda to step up.\textsuperscript{447} A moment of failure – the proposal of yet another resolution focused on sexual violence – is turned into a success at a point in the future. This turning to advantage is not accidental or behaviour on a whim but part of careful and constant attentiveness to the environment. This is metis.

\textsuperscript{446} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{447} Ibid.
Chapter 7: Telling Relations: Holding Space

As one explores the terrain of these practices, something is constantly slipping away, something that can be neither said nor ‘taught’ but must be ‘practiced.’

Hercule Poirot took a hired car back to Broadhinny. He was tired because he had been thinking. Thinking was always exhausting. And his thinking had not been entirely satisfactory. It was as though a pattern, perfectly visible, was woven into a piece of material and yet, although he was holding the piece of material, he could not see what the pattern was. But it was all there. That was the point. It was all there. Only it was one of those patterns, self-coloured and subtle, that are not easy to perceive.

I think I know this feeling. The unsatisfying and exhausting sense that there is most certainly a pattern in the material I have at hand but that, despite being ‘perfectly visible,’ it remains beyond my ken. Perhaps this is a way to think about this project as being about trying to perceive the ‘self-coloured and subtle’ feminist patterns that are present in the discursive fabric of the Women, Peace and Security policy space of the Security Council. Trying to identify the shapes emerging as segments of stories linked together, coded into themes, a detail here connected in its outline with one over there, a stitch of colour connected with others clustered together further away, and repeated at regular intervals or not. Trying to trace how particular threads seem to run steadily through patches of shifting colour, identifying themselves as the warp, the longitudinal threads, held in tension in the loom and providing the structure around which colours run, over and under, cluster together and

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448 de Certeau.
449 Agatha Christie, *Mrs McGinty’s Dead*, Chapter 22
split apart, running out here and picking up again further on (or not). Being able to
tell the moments at which the addition of an extra strand of colour begins and how,
once lying next to another, it resolves into a solid mass. There is something to
thinking with the idea of woven fabric, of textile. It is a metaphor that I return to
again and again in my mind. It provides the magical shift of imagination required to
simultaneously hold so many ‘things’ together, to comprehend threads running across
each other and seeming to form quite solid and recognizable shapes. But, as De
Certeau points out, “as one explores the terrain of these practices, something is
constantly slipping away, something that can be neither said nor ‘taught’ but must be
‘practiced.’” 450

_A Return to Stories of: Telling Feminist Spaces_

Stories of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and of 1325 -- the Resolution in
the Security Council by which it was inaugurated -- are often told as stories of
feminist engagements with international law and policy. These are stories of absences
in law and gaps in its enforcement; of collaborative efforts to get governments (acting
nationally and internationally) to, at the very least, ‘pay attention’ to the marginalized
issues, places, and bodies of those understood (biologically and culturally) as
Women. Any attempt to write these histories here can really be no more than a
cursory sketch invoking years of advocacy and more processes, people and events
that I know. I am so very conscious of how such stories oversimplify, flatten and

450 de Certeau, 77.
misrepresent relationships and their subjects. And yet, it was simple narratives, potted histories, repeated, remembered in outline and reconstructed as their connections with other fragments were learned, that were perhaps most significant in my learning to do my job. It was through such stories that I figured out what it was to be one of the two paid staff (at that time Project Associates) of WILPF’s PeaceWomen Project at its UN office in New York. I imagine now, almost a decade later, these histories are already known by the (mostly) young (mostly) women who volunteer to work for the project as Interns or Research Fellows. If there were to be staffing expansions or shifts beyond those of recent years, I imagine these histories would be assumed known.

Despite, perhaps because of, being trained as a lawyer in South Africa in the late 90s, on arrival in the US to complete an LLM, I was only marginally aware of the specificities of international law that could be framed as addressing the concerns of women or of gender equality.\footnote{My International Law class was, from what I dimly recall, mostly concerned with the formalities of the international system and with the texts produced in its judicial institutions. I think we read a case about piracy and several on territorial disputes. My classmates and I were certainly well placed to consider the events of the 11\textsuperscript{th} of September 2001 in terms of their potential to meet the requirements to justify a sanctioned Use of Force by the United States - even although we had mostly stood in slack-jawed fascination as the second plane flew into the towers on the tiny screen in the corner above the counter of our law school cafeteria. If the word schadenfreude was one in our vocabulary it would have been used to express our sentiment in that moment. We had a sense of global politics that had most of us dismissing the subject of ‘International Law’ as not being real Law and treating with cynicism the required (embarrassing) role-playing exercise in which we, as a class, had to ‘re-enact’ (what we imagined to be) the Security Council’s deliberations concerning the former Yugoslavia -- in retrospect, our efforts to sincerely ‘debate’ the issues is perhaps the most embarrassing part because it was not undertaken with any sense of irony.} By the time I left my job as WILPF’s PeaceWomen Project Director five years later, the stories of these laws and their adoption had
somehow soaked through my skin, become my own -- not as an individual actor within them but as a member of the transnational feminist community they described and inscribed. I had heard the names spoken -- Mexico City, Copenhagen, Nairobi, Beijing, Cairo, Vienna -- words that held feminist spaces beyond the cities themselves, beyond geographic coordinates, meeting rooms or even outcome documents of the UN World Conferences they signify. I heard them as casual references in conversations, marking a speaker’s presence during an historic occasion, or used as shorthand to reference or evaluate developments in international policies to promote and protect the human rights of women. Over time I learned their association with this or that process, with aspects of women’s lives or bodies made into discrete issue areas, as markers of a particular moment and level of support for women’s human rights globally -- Beijing in its breadth and inclusivity a high point, a sacred space (of rights) to be protected and now, in the backlash against women’s rights by totalitarian/conservative/neo-liberal governments globally, a space once claimed, shrinking. But, just as often Beijing was the name of a place that women had gathered as a transnational social force -- in WILPF’s case coming together across a continent, a train from Helsinki to Beijing, stopping in seven cities and meeting “with women from all walks of life.” I heard much of this journey from older WILPF members -- a journey described in a recent reflection by its organizers as: “A rolling think tank, a slumber party, a ‘prison cell’: The Most Exciting Journey of a Generation."452 The

NGO Forum preceding the official intergovernmental meeting and ‘the NGO Tent’ at the fourth World Conference on Women have also taken on mythical status. These gatherings of women/feminists/NGOs in relation to international law and policymaking are often featured in the inter-generational storytelling that shaped my own understanding of the interconnectedness and ways of working of the Global Women’s Movement (as that amorphous and yet almost-tangible formation is so often called). They are also the stories that helped me figure out my own place in that movement---the organizational lineage of WILPF drawing me closer (by virtue of my employment) to a mythical movement space but also into embodied relationships (of varying levels of intimacy) with others outside of WILPF who ‘were there’ in those places and times, giving flesh to the forms of feminist presence. The memories shared via these Place Names have become strands woven into my own storytelling of laws and of collective efforts for change. These narratives not only constitute our historical understanding of events. Much of what I now know of the structure of the UN, and of how which of its various parts might be relevant to which issues, came from such stories and participating in their citation. Like the narratives of Syria encountered earlier, they too shape understandings of space, position and possibility for those whose stories (of feminist interventions) find their way here and for those who, from one place or another, are interested in engaging the Security Council’s WPS policy space. What do these other stories of intervention in this space offer for feminists? And how, if it is hidden in and by praxis, might we find its traces in and

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453 See Baruch and Jain.
through the practices it seeks to undo? What is it that cannot be ‘taught’ but must be practiced?

_In Between_

The initial responses to my somewhat vague question – how does Security Council policy get made – do not, at least at first glance, convey anything specific about that process. For several of my primary interlocutors the response took the form of an expletive, followed by an apology and an explanation for their reaction either to say that the question was an extremely hard one or that they did not feel themselves in a position to give a definitive or authoritative answer.\(^{454}\) For some, as discussed previously, this involved acknowledging the contingency of the answer – “it depends which document;” “it’s different every time.”\(^{455}\) HM’s immediate response was that she was “not the right person to ask.” She had worked for UNIFEM and then UN Women in New York for over a decade, and at senior level, guiding the fund’s work on peace and security, including its work to influence the language of resolutions – successfully on several key occasions. I don’t know anybody whose experience in this space as a feminist is more extensive in relation to this. Her sense (despite this experience) of not being in a position to know, may have been based on not being a representative of a State with a formal role in Council negotiations and decision-making and thus not having ‘been in the room’ as such. It could also be a remark on the extent to which feminist advocates working for gender equality within the system

\(^{454}\) CM. HM.  
\(^{455}\) JS.
(whether in NGOs, the UN Secretariat or Member States) are excluded from the most intimate or consequential parts of the process. Indeed all of my interlocutors in the course of our continued conversation ultimately provided a range of specific examples of successful feminist interventions in Security Council policy. As I suggest in the preceding chapter, these stories – of the experience of intervening in policymaking – illustrate a deep and enacted knowledge of the practices and relations of power in the Security Council.

As I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, feminists in fact rely on their ability to articulate the dominant practices of that space in order to be legible. What makes this possible – and perhaps this is the gesture my interlocutors were making in their initial response – is that the Security Council policy space is in fact characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability. However, rather than being paralyzed in the face of uncertainty, feminists rely on those ambiguous spaces – whether within concepts, tropes such as the Woman-in-Conflict, or the informality of process – to create a space of politics. It is these ‘non-spaces’ that feminist policy advocates exploit in order to intervene where they have no proper place. It makes sense then that metis is sometimes understood as a ‘knowledge of ambiguity.’ In being ready and acting to turn those open spaces to their benefit they are enacting metis. In this, as discussed in the previous chapter, these moments demonstrate those characteristics distinctive of metis to which De Certeau draws our attention. That is, elements “constituted by three relations of metis, to the ‘situation,’ to disguise, and to

456 Letiche, 9.
a paradoxical invisibility.\footnote{de Certeau, 81.} The first two of these were considered in the preceding chapter. And how might we conceptualize an analysis of the final element that distinguishes metis — its relation to a paradoxical invisibility? In one sense this is a return to the idea that metis hides in practice and is its enabling condition — what allows those without a place to intervene. In articulating the terms of the system (in terms of both timing and form) feminists are able to place themselves as legible in relation to that which is already known – those forms that resonate with familiarity as ‘belonging.’\footnote{Harriss. Christie.} How then to further articulate the creative aspect of metis — the introduction of elements believed to transcend the boundaries of that system? De Certeau suggests that:

[a] practice of the order constructed by others redistributes its space; it creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces” and “for utopian points of reference.”\footnote{de Certeau, 18.}

If that is indeed something that can only be understood \textit{in} practice, how, other than by making the attempt ourselves, might we understand the creative potential that feminist interventions carry?

For this it is worth returning to De Certeau and the claim that metis can be understood not only as the tactical logics of everyday practices but also that this logic is one characteristic of rhetoric and of the story. Thus the characteristics that differentiate metis are “equally characteristic of the stories that tell about it.”\footnote{Ibid., 81.} To
contemplate the paradoxical invisibility of feminist interventions in policymaking practices requires a return to the moment in them in which ambiguity is confronted. Perhaps there the creative potential of metis, the ‘play in the system,’ can be found. And, at some point I began to think that there was something more to be said of both the expletives and the explanations of my interlocutors in the face of ‘not knowing.’ Given that metic intelligence is a form of knowledge often not explicitly recognized by its practitioners perhaps was there something more to be explored.

When I revisited these responses I found that when knowledge of the process was claimed as incomplete, their response, if not in the form of a specific example, was to suggest people who, in their view, would be best placed to provide crucial insight into this or that aspect of policymaking. “You should talk to ….. became a refrain. On the one hand, this reflects an understanding of positionality in the system being critical to ‘knowing.’ It also acknowledges the contingency of that position; any particular process has a multiplicity of parts and an extensive cast whose composition and individual identity varies depending on the resolution in question and the year and month in which it was adopted. Frequently the names given were individuals recommended on the basis of their years of experience in a particular organizational role that required their being ‘involved’ in the making of Council policy generally. Some of those suggested as being able to provide insight worked as representatives for a Security Council Member State and held responsibility for a particular WPS related theme – thus placing them as individually responsible for the initial drafts of policy text and their movement through a negotiation process. Others were people
who were known to have been part of or had access to specific attempts (not all successful) to have WPS specific policies or language included in Council texts. Some had reviewed, commented on, or suggested amendments to, those drafts and/or provided an opinion on the desirability of including (or excluding) particular issues or wording. Most of the names had provided or been asked to provide specific language to reflect the outcome for which they were advocating — preferably in a ‘previously agreed’ form. Mapping these individuals and the institutional structures within which they operate certainly suggests aspects of the logics of the process. But what, aside from accounts of particular policies, was there to be learned from this response? There was something in the “you should talk to…” that resonated for me, at least on subsequent reflection, as being a key element of how policymaking itself ‘works’ and of how one begins to intervene.

The Relations of Metis

I’ve spent a lot of time reflecting on relationships in this space. Perhaps I would have done so anyway, but being in an ongoing relationship with many of the people I interviewed made doing so seem both an ethical and intellectual requirement. ‘Relationship’ has become a word that wraps itself around most of my thoughts, attempting to tug them together against the protestations of my typing fingers. As I write through various parts the word surfaces again and again. As I swim up to the wall and tuck in, exhaled in the turn and pushed back for the next length.

Beyond the tiredness of the cliché that ‘it’s not what you know, but who you know,’” lies a way of operating that, like metis, is characterized by its paradoxical invisibility. It is not simply about knowing someone who happens to occupy a position of
knowledge or authority in the system; although there is certainly an element of that. It is a way of operating that begins with knowing an environment by knowing the position of people in it and by knowing their relationships to other people and things (whether policy documents, processes or other pieces of information) at a particular moment in time. But it is also about being cognizant of one’s own place in those relationships and what opportunities such might allow. This may seem trite – after all isn’t our way of successfully navigating in any environment dependent on knowing our place in relation to other people and things? I’ve caught glimpses of this in academia too. Perhaps it has resonance in many bureaucratic institutions – when action is arranged and ordered in clusters and layers of invisible authority. Knowing how to ‘get things done’ in these complex environments involves, for example, knowing which budget has a line of money attached and which people to ask in order to influence its allocation. The multilateral policy environment of the UN Security Council is one shaped and defined by the relationships in it. Bjola and Kornprobst, in fact explore the practices of diplomacy as ‘making relations’ and find a place for this framing within each of the mainstream theoretical traditions in IR. Even where these relations are understood as relationships between one Member State’s desires and that of another, ultimately these are made manifest through the interactional space of interpersonal relations. In attempts to intervene in this space – one in which feminism has no proper place – how people and things are related (the relationships in which they exist) takes on a particular salience. This is especially so if we take to heart Enloe’s reminder that to do anything as a feminist is to do so in relation to a
collective; a collective to which we are accountable. What then is it to enact metis in this space?

In Bjola and Kornprobst’s formulation, metis is ‘the agential power to change relations.’ When we think of the social space as discursive, to change relations – to enact Metis – is to change the relationship between and amongst subjects and objects recognized there. But being able to make that move, is also to be already situated in relation to the space. What then is it to think of the relationships on which feminist interventions rely, not only in order to be legible to the system, but to open space in that? And how, in doing that, do we account for ourselves as part of a feminist collective? There is something intriguing and promising in the idea of Metis put forward by Letiche who refers to it as engaging “the invisible, virtual structures of the possible.” For me the virtual structures of the possible in this case are what I’ve begun to think of as those drawn by feminist relations.

The relationships drawn in feminist interventions between subjects and objects inside the policy space — so as to put them in a new relation to one another — are in part reliant on the relationships they articulate to subjects and objects outside of that space and in other moments. I want to suggest that part of “play” introduced into the order is their invocation of feminist relationships between differently situated allies as a way to intervene. Their doing so provides space for a shift in the understanding of particular social circumstances and the alternatives for

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461 Bjola and Kornprobst, 113.
462 Hunt, 314.
463 Letiche, 9.
action within that. At times this is about drawing on the particularities of their location and subject positions in relation to power. One example, given earlier, is of those feminists located within the UN working with those in Civil Society to articulate a problem (from the outside) and then provide a way of addressing it:

Of course I am within the UN so I have to be good but NGO WG, Peacewomen can be much more critical. and I have definitely worked closely with JS in particular on encouraging her to write …critical letters about certain things. I can't remember any particular one right now. So whereas we would be there with member states saying 'oh you've been criticized, well here's some information that would be useful etc.

As often, however, the relationships are with feminists to whom Member States feel some level of obligation and political responsibility. In the following example, relationships between differently located feminists are invoked in order to side-step the problem of Members States attempting to avoid their international WPS commitments on the grounds sovereignty.

It has become a practice that UN Women (previously UNIFEM) and the NGO Working Group provide a ‘briefing’ (once called a training) on WPS policy each year to those joining as elected members. Although this has taken different forms over the years, when I was involved in delivering these, part of their goal was to have Mission staff not otherwise ‘responsible’ for the WPS portfolio, to see its relevance to their work — for example, depending on a Mission’s internal structure, the person previously responsible for human rights work at the UN might become responsible for WPS issues but be separate from the person tasked with working on the mandates of Peacekeeping operations. These internal arrangements are ones that have a
particularly significant impact on the ability of the Council’s Elected Members States to themselves effectively intervene in policy processes otherwise dominated by the desires and interactions of the Permanent Members.\footnote{Schia.}

These collaborative briefings by feminists located in the UN and Civil Society served as a way to encourage Missions to (as a collective) work to implement the WPS Agenda in the day-to-day work of the Council. By highlighting the various points of entry for WPS issues across other thematic and country-specific issues and thinking through how these might interact with the State’s own obligations, priorities and processes, these briefings are intended to open space for alternate practices.

Although initially taken up only by those States already supportive of these policies, it has since become so much part of practice that there is a certain level of expectation that newly-elected Member States will agree to participate. Although these occasions do not sit within the formal processes of policymaking, they are nevertheless an important aspect of what it takes to intervene. It is, at the very least, an early opportunity to set up relationships with the Elected Members (and the staff) on whose interests and actions feminist interventions so often rely. Such a briefing was provided to the staff of the Mission of Pakistan when it was elected to the Council in 2013. The example of this case is not offered for the success of these interventions per se. Says HM:

\begin{quote}
we had such a hostile reaction from them when we did their briefing when they came on the Council. Horrible, horrible meeting. Just horrible. Where they just attacked us. Awful.\footnote{HM.}
\end{quote}
It is, however, an illustration of the all-too-common response to feminist interventions that go beyond the abstract. For feminists, a key aspect of the Council’s WPS policy is that it requires commitments that are driven by States outside of ‘intervention’ by force as such. However, whether a conflict is recognized by the Council as one in which they should ‘intervene’ is core to the politics in this space and of course a key dilemma for feminist peace activists attendant to acting in this space. However, for many feminists intervening here, these efforts are also driven by desires to see UN resources in places of conflict mobilized so as to better allow the building of peace and gender equality and, to support the work of domestic/local feminist peace efforts. This certainly seems the intention behind the many National Action Plans in this area. However, for many states to recognize the demand of this is to raise the possibility that conflicts within their own sovereign territories might come under scrutiny. Avoiding this scrutiny by claiming forms of conflict as ‘internal’ is a longstanding feature of the WPS space. It is an issue that most often manifests in places of so-called ‘high politics’ — the debates or press conferences or statements issued on this or that place. But they are visible too in those spaces to which feminists are given admittance — like these briefings which, it turns out, was exactly the problem:

466 For many years, for example, the Security Council (in the form of the US) refused to contemplate Civil Society speakers from Colombia presenting during the annual WPS Open Debate. Now that a much lauded peace agreement has been signed, the existence of conflict within that State can hardly be denied — the civil society speaker in last week’s Open Debate on WPS, marking the 17th Anniversary of the adoption of SCR 1325, was from Colombia.
She explains:

Because we had made a very stupid mistake. We put into their folder the summary of the meeting that was held with NGOs in Pakistan where they were talking about a National Action Plan for Pakistan on 1325. And the Mission went berserk and said that is for countries in Armed Conflict. We are not in armed conflict. and they just started attacking us on various tiny micro-principles of international law around sexual violence and other gender issues — at the briefing. It was terrible.  

But, as is the case with Metis, the experience of this served as a lesson and, for HM, as a lesson in the tactic that she refers to as “coming at the question at both ends.”

As HM explains, feminist relationships extending beyond the international that allowed them to turn the situation:

we then went around them the other way and organized a big meeting of civil society in Islamabad with the National Commission on Women and the Ministry of Defense and the Foreign Ministry to discuss this. …They were ready to shut us down. They were ready to kick UNIFEM out of the country for working on 1325.

Feminists located in the international space in New York mobilized the Pakistan Mission’s own claims of national sovereignty and transformed the debate into one that then took place on their own ‘sovereign’ grounds. HM noted that just being able to demonstrate that there is a serious civil society interest in this and they don't need to be worried, that actually helped a lot.

We need to do much more with that.

Feminists in the WPS space also make use of other ambiguous but more ‘internal’
spaces in order to draw in, and on, these relationships. For example, even if not willing to allow women from places such as Burma or Colombia to appear as representatives in public — such as at the WPS Open Debate — there are other options. These include meetings with individual Member States but also with the Council as a whole in an Arria Formula-style meeting. While these do not necessarily appear immediately consequential in policy terms, with the patience of metis they become so:

On Syria our work was very different, our engagement was very different. But what resulted following the Arria was the adoption of the humanitarian resolution in the Council. the first one by consensus, which had strong language on participation. And that wouldn't have occurred, in my opinion, without the high-level meetings that the Syrian women had with ambassadors when they were here and with the Council. And it was a clear part of our recommendations. you know our focus was on Geneva 2 peace talks but also the work of the Council must include language...etc. And I think that was again by their direct advocacy, and our role in facilitating it, and more reminding, I think, raising the stakes for the ambassadors and the Council Members.

In a sense the power of these meetings is that the individuals constituting the institution are brought into direct relationship with those their decisions effect.

You know when we had the Arria it was mostly ambassadors, really engaged, much in contrast to the formal council meetings. The three representatives from Syria gave statements, then there were some responses with questions and then they responded to some provocative questions and some other issues. I think that's the most interesting interaction you have with ambassadors.

I went on to ask LM whether she thought these spaces — Arria Formula meetings — were important to introducing progressive ideas and she responded that this was somewhat of an open question:

I think we're...exploring. Compared to Open Debates, for example, which are
basically a formality, right? But, for me I think Arrias have had, at least in the four years before, had moved more to side-events. They became side events actually and that was bad.

Although she didn’t expand on exactly what she meant by ‘side-events’ within that space, the term carries a carnival feel — a room filled with people there more for the entertainment value than that they had something to contribute. In at least the few that I attended after leaving WILPF, the audience of interested observers almost overwhelmed the conversation between Ambassadors and civil society and the air was certainly thick with performance. But these open meetings also pose risks for civil society activists who, for the most part, are not popular with their own governments and their responses consequently more guarded. The problem, posits LM, was that those sorts of meetings “didn’t hold that sacred space,” going on to explain that “for the Arria on Syria … we changed that. We said it would be closed and no other Member States were allowed in. It was only WILPF and UN Women and DPA [who] were there.” Of course there might be those feminists who would protest the closed nature of the meeting as exclusionary. However, the case for inclusion would have to be strong in order to operate against the wishes of those whose bodies are put at risk by participating openly. So, on the one hand, relationships with and between networks of women at the national and international level are integral to ensuring that Council policy spaces that are opened then become filled with feminist voices (although this cannot be guaranteed). They are, however, also important for establishing and keeping other networks activated for as yet

471 LM.
unimagined futures. In this way, meetings may be more than the space they initially provide. I asked HM if she thought the many meetings that take place in the UN environment to be critical spaces for feminists. Her response:

Yeah I really do. I think we underestimate – I mean I hate meetings – and I hate meetings for the sake of meeting. But, um, it is an occasion in which you can make a connection. 472

Going on to say that really the “only purpose” of the aforementioned briefings of Elected Member States is:

to see their faces and have them see ours and then you can carry on a conversation. Because frankly that is how things work. Once you get somebody's cell phone number, you can make something happen — especially Mission Members who are on the Council. 473

This is not just to have them abstractly available as a contact. To establish such a relationship requires the practice of use: “you have to be bold enough to use it and call and say listen, I’ve got some information for you, or can I help.” This is not a magic formula, but, says HM, “I think that's what matters.” 474 Without these relationships to leverage there is little space to intervene in the future. For most feminists, as HM points out, these are not relationships directly with the highest-level of decision-making in the Council. But this in itself is not a barrier:

of course when you are working on gender you are usually working on a subcutaneous level as it were, under the skin in two ways: you are working with people low down the level and you're working on something that's an irritant. So they're not in a good position to push their Mission either. But those are the people you start with. But then you have to also try to get higher up. 475

472 HM.
473 Ibid.
474 Ibid.
475 Ibid.
And those higher up contacts, when one is not in the seat of power, can (perhaps must) be found in everyday places. And for women those everyday spaces are not the same as they are for men. HM’s best connection into the places of power [the Ambassador for the UN Mission of a P3 state],

whose son was in the same class of my son. … I had him over a couple of times, got to know her very well. We got on really well as friends. She is now the ambassador in Geneva handling the […] talks.

These unexpected everyday spaces are indeed the ones in which feminist relationships are nurtured – in this project mostly relationships between those identifying as Women – and include book clubs and gatherings of friends for after-work drinks or Sunday brunch. Admittedly these are not the spaces of policymaking as such but, these are the spaces of tactic which, De Certeau reminds us,

insinuates itself into the other’s place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety, without being able to keep it at a distance.

Having feminist allies on the inside – however those relationships are initially produced or sustained – matters. “I mean,” says HM, “in the end it really is about having allies across the system.” Indeed, a lack of feminist allies – and particularly at higher levels in the decision-making hierarchy – has driven many feminists away. It was certainly a reason that HM cited for her own departure: “There was nobody. All my allies were below me. Which is fine, but you can't pull strings.”476 The example she went on to give was of the sort many feminists on the inside share and is so

476 Ibid.
perfectly illustrative of the need for committed allies in the face of so many non-feminist women in the positions allocated to women.

This is a story of ‘up-stream’ female colleagues ostensibly representing women’s interests at UN Women unwilling to risk their own political capital for the sake of intervening – even when there have been similar interventions in the past and there appeared little risk for future access. In this case a senior manager at UN Women was unwilling to find place in her budget to pay for the outgoing office bearers of the Special Court on Sierra Leone to take up an invitation, issued by the Security Council, to brief them in New York. The Court itself, winding down, had no budget and the Member States overseeing the Court had refused. The Security Council does not, in itself, control a budget for such purposes. HM heard about this and was introduced to one of these invitees during an unrelated ceremony at the Hague. HM recalls the then senior Court official saying:

but not only do we not have any money to pay for my own flight because the court is broke and … the board of member states have refused to pay for my flight to New York… but I had proposed that they should pay not just for me the … of the court but also for the Chief Registrar, the Chief prosecutor, the Chief Defender, all of whom are women – all of whom are women – for the first time in history. And she said that the board refused their flights saying, ‘we don’t want to pay for a shopping trip to New York.’

This sort of sexist stereotyping of women – even when they hold senior positions within the international system – is sadly not unusual in the UN. However, it does read as unacceptable grounds for refusing to facilitate a Security Council invitation.

477 Ibid.
Beyond anything else, for HM this was a moment for feminist solidarity. Without a second thought she responded: “I’ll pay. Don’t worry about it. Tell me when you need to travel. We’ll deal with it.”\textsuperscript{478} Unfortunately on returning to New York, and with everything underway, the newly installed management at UN Women, on being asked to sign off on discretionary funds simply refused, saying:

there’s no way we are paying for this. Absolutely no way. Because if their management board said no, we're not going to pay and undermine these member states. There is no way.\textsuperscript{479}

Needless to say, the staff of the various UN agencies spend their existence working around the various desires and refusals of Member States but that is what it requires – a willingness to work around authority. HM did not stop there. She picked up the phone and called SH:

who at that point was the only other person across the UN that I knew at my level with control of a budget.” and I called her and she said ’those fuckwits,’ of course I’m going to pay. She wrote me a hilarious email, …and then we called a couple of other people and suddenly I had donations and commitments from other people. But all women. And the lesson for me was: you need allies.”

The visit proceeded and by all accounts “turned out to be a spectacular success. Spectacular beyond everybody's imagination.”\textsuperscript{480} “You know,” she went on to muse, “in the end I paid for everything, I didn’t have to use their money. It’s just that my boss needed the security of saying…. [the cover?] the cover, exactly.”\textsuperscript{481} HM reflected
in the UN in fact, advocacy and policymaking – a lot of it is about – if you're going to do something different, get cover. And I don't think we even know how to do that. We do in civil society, female solidarity is fine. But, it’s hard to have female solidarity at the higher levels when as soon as you exhibit female solidarity you are discredited.  

On the one hand, these stories (and several others that emerged in my interviews) reveal the urgent real need for the UN to appoint and retain women within the UN — and particularly in senior positions. This is certainly the appeal (and political project) of many who have worked on the inside or continue to do so. But I want to make a further point here about allies and feminist relationships. If, as I have suggested, these relationships of solidarity between differently situated feminists are what is activated in order to intervene, how might that take us further in thinking about the enactment of metis as a feminist moment?

De Certeau writes that, to recognize the tricks and turns of the everyday in stories about them, “all we have to do is not limit ourselves to examining their forms or repetitive structures (though this is also a necessary task)” but also the horizons of possibility they contain. First, this requires an embrace of ambiguity and of the potential of future moments. To identify and work with ambiguities of the system to shift its potential. Policy is, in its nature, about the future. To have desired feminist language included is not the stopping place. It is an opening of space for a future

482 Ibid.
484 See, for example, Ingveld Bode, "Where Are the Female Leaders at the Un? Gender Bias Persists," Pass Blue (2017).
485 de Certeau.
moment and, potentially, an opening that will be taken up by feminists located elsewhere (in time and place). But how we tell of efforts to include language – even as we analyze that language – is an important task. If, in our analysis, meanings are portrayed as fixed and feminists as having failed, we shut down what is possible. In order to embrace the power of ambiguity for future interventions we must be willing to weave (or leave) some of our own. Perhaps these are the moments that we most need to be reflexive. As Letiche points out, “the actual possibilities, ideas and solutions that are evident in the phenomenon of metis do not involve the rational subject at all–or phrased differently, in the experience of metis, the subject becomes other than itself.” For me this is a reminder that our telling of these stories matter; it is in the telling – the articulation of feminist relations and feminist relationships – that we trace our collective. When accounts of feminist interventions in policymaking do not articulate those feminist relations, a sense of community — and the space of solidarity — remains untold and perhaps lost along the way. Wibben encourages us as critical scholars, “to remain reflexive and explore the limits” of our own horizons and puts to us these questions:

What is it that we do not yet know? How can we write and produce knowledges in such a way that allow for the next person to question and displace them, if necessary?

I want to suggest that by embracing and incorporating (as she does) the uncertainty and ambiguity of our interventions as feminists in this space, we may allow for

486 Letiche, 8.
accounts of, for example, Security, War, and Gender, that “can be un-made and re-made, again and again.” Perhaps, when our stories of feminist practices of intervention are proliferated and layered and “pushed to their limits” we can imagine our feminist interventions as tracing the “network of an antidiscipline” towards which De Certeau gestures. And thus the importance of the stories between us – it is those that trace the shape of the feminist community to which we aspire even as we use and invoke that community in our efforts.

As I have moved through this dissertation, I was, for the most part, concerned with opening space for more nuanced thinking about feminist interventions in the Security Council. To some extent Metis has operated to heroic effect in making this possible – through a resurrection of a Failed Feminist figure. I don’t mean by this to suggest an uncritical attitude toward our interventions as feminists. Enacting or following the tactical forms of Metis does not, in itself, guarantee any particular normative position. As Spivak reminds us, reaching the ethical position can only ever be an attempt. Although to be human “the wholly other – must be thought and must be thought through imaging,” . . . “by definition, we cannot – no self can – reach the quite other.” And thus “the ethical situation can only be figured in the ethical experience of the impossible.”

We cannot simply step away from deciding or ignore this gap nor is it something that can be bridged as such. The ethical project is also not one of building knowledge – the other cannot be reached by building

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488 Ibid.
489 de Certeau, xv.
databases of “facts” (about the Woman-in-Conflict or the Feminist Insider).\textsuperscript{491} Rather, as Spivak suggests, “we must somehow attempt to \textit{supplement} the gap”– to engage in persistent critique to add to or aid in crossing this originary gap.\textsuperscript{492} Metis offers a way to think through these spaces and moments – both as ways to understand the forms by which feminist interventions work and, as a reminder of the need for reflexivity:

The essential features of mêtis …. imply certain qualities which are also attributed to the curve, to what is pliable and twisted, to what is oblique and ambiguous as opposed to what is straight, direct, rigid and unequivocal. The ultimate expression of these qualities is the circle, the bond) that is perfect because it completely turns back on itself\textsuperscript{493}

As Spivak puts it: “In the aporia or the double bind, to decide is the burden of responsibility. The typecase of the ethical sentiment” – the form in which it is contained– “is regret, not self-congratulation.”\textsuperscript{494} I don’t see Metis as offering an escape from this position. Rather, by beginning as already failed, by beginning with the impossibility of knowing, Metis draws our attention to each moment and the ethical/political responsibilities we bear in those.

\textsuperscript{491} Ibid., 104.
\textsuperscript{492} Ibid., 98.
\textsuperscript{493} Detienne, 46. Kopelson, 131-2.
\textsuperscript{494} Spivak, \textit{An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization}, 104.
A Methodological Afterword

Having reached this end point it seems more possible to articulate and account for some of my methodological and editorial choices. I was driven throughout by a consciousness of this text as something that my reader would encounter and move through experientially. My own narrative strategy then was to order the text so as to both lead the reader through a space by providing familiar anchors that would leave to interpretation deliberate moments of disjuncture and having to ‘figure the connections’ between things. Given that I was attempting to produce a text that would say something of what it is to encounter and learn the policymaking practices of the Security Council, it seemed important to ‘show’ rather than ‘tell.’ I also wanted to create a text in which the dominant objects and the hidden ‘rules of the game’ for feminists in this space were discovered through seeing them as both contingent and ‘in use’ rather than as already known or fixed. That is not to say that there was no method here but rather to acknowledge that my method was not a matter of routinized steps applied to a static and pre-determined object. In this I took inspiration from Patti Lather’s work on the “methodology of getting lost” in which she asks “difficult knowledge questions” about inadequacies of categories, spaces of productive tensions and necessary complicity in an effort as she puts at “dispersing rather than capturing meanings, and producing bafflement rather than solutions.” As my other feminist post-structuralist inspiration Mariysa Zalewski explains,

distances itself from the demand and temptation to produce a ‘comfort text’ – “one that maps easily on to our usual ways of knowing … and suggests that the task in social research involves counter-practices of knowing and telling, and calling into question the construction of authoritative narratives, ‘even while one’s confidence is troubled.’

In the discourse analytic approach I have chosen here, discourse analysis, refers to “the practice of analyzing empirical raw materials and information as discursive forms.” Empirical data then are “viewed as sets of signifying practices that constitute a ‘discourse’ and its ‘reality,’ thus providing the conditions which enable subjects to experience the world of objects, words and practices.” The contingency of discursive spaces and this opening to non-conventional texts is also what allows room for discourse theorists “to draw upon and develop a wide variety of techniques and methods in linguistic and literary theory commensurate with its ontological assumptions.” Taking up this approach allowed me to consider a wide range of data as possible text or ‘writing’ and to provide interpretive readings of those.

Throughout the course of this dissertation I have read – and interpreted – the practices of WPS policymaking in the Security Council, and of feminist interventions in that space, from (and between) a number of quite different texts. It was my intention to look to texts other than those conventionally interpreted within feminist policy critiques and, in addition, to read the discourses of conventional objects in

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496 Zalewski, "Distracted Reflections on the Production, Narration and Refusal of Feminist Knowledge in International Relations," 47.
497 Howarth and Stavrakakis, 4.
498 Ibid.
499 Ibid.
alternative ways. Thus, my initial account of SCR 1325 treats it as an object of knowledge that travels within the policy space quite apart from its content. In Place of Practice – Situating Narratives – I narrate my reading of the textual space of a ‘Working Paper’ on WPS as going beyond the ‘content’ of the analysis. In the early part of this text – but particularly in Locating Failure – I read academic feminist critiques of WPS policy discourse as textual spaces in which that discourse is both critiqued and produced. In this, I use the techniques of narrative criticism and attempt to identify how these narratives work to achieve their critical objective and to explore the subjects and objects that they produce. I read these against the text of my own embodied memory of the same institutional space in order to then generate the subjects whose position I go on to consider in the remainder of the text. In Subjects of Practice I treat the WPS Open Debates of the Security Council, broadly speaking, as a textual space in which appear both written transcripts (evidencing linguistic practices) and non-linguistic practices – read in from my own experience of their effects in that space and from the formal procedural texts of the Security Council. The remaining texts that I analyze for the second part of this piece were those from the transcripts of my interviews with my feminist interlocutors. The transcripts from all 15 interviews serve as background but I focused on five specific interview transcripts that I then interpreted through the rhetorical and conceptual framing of the logics of Metis. This limited selection of sources removes the possibility of this analysis being treated as an ethnographic account from which we might draw a generalizable truth. I realized early in my interview process that I wanted to focus on the interviews I conducted
with those with whom I considered myself in feminist community and who had, in their work, specifically focused on seeing feminist meaning included in the Council’s policy texts. I used their feminist subject positions as an anchor and our conversations as the material from which to weave an interpretive narrative of feminist practice.
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