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Gendering Security Sector Reform through Capacity Building? The MINUSMA Specialized Police Team on Crime Scene Management

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ABSTRACT
This article studies norm translation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by interrogating the ways in which external support can contribute to gendering the security sector in conflict-affected countries. Through a case study of a Norwegian-led Specialized Police Team which provided capacity building in crime scene management to Malian Security Forces as part of the UN mission in Mali, it analyses how different understandings of gender inform gender mainstreaming practice. The analysis shows that while the Norwegian officers worked actively to promote gender equality and women's participation, the possibilities for capacity building to contribute to a gendering of the security sector are limited by the lack of more transformative understandings of gender to inform practice.

Introduction

This article is concerned with the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda when external actors offer support to security sector reform in conflict-affected countries. In recent years, Mali's security sector has received support and assistance from, among others, the UN, EU, France, and the United States. This has led to an academic interest in the role of external actors in security sector reform (SSR) in Mali.[1] Existing research on this topic however rarely applies a gender perspective, perhaps not surprisingly given that the gender perspective is often ignored in practice

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[1]Cold-Ravnkilde and Nissen, "Schizophrenic Agendas"; Tull, "Rebuilding Mali's Army"; Marsh and Roland-sen, "Fragmented We Fall"; Bagayoko, "Explaining the Failure".

when support to reform of the security sector is offered. Observers of the Malian case have noted that this support is characterized by a lack of inclusiveness, a tension between short- and long-term goals, and a focus on capacity building and technical assistance.[2]

While it may not always be their priority, external actors arrive in Mali with organizational gender mainstreaming mandates. The adoption of resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) in 2000 represents a landmark for the recognition of women's roles in peace and security, including in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and peacekeeping. Since then, the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda has developed through the adoption of ten resolutions by the UN Security Council, and as such they should be implemented by all Member States and relevant actors, including UN peacekeeping missions. When SSR is addressed in the WPS resolutions, these focus on linking SSR to preventing and responding to sexual violence in conflict, including more women in the security sector, and a recognition that SSR should help to achieve women's protection from violence and access to justice.[3]

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda thus provides a global normative framework for mainstreaming gender in SSR. Yet, feminist scholars have identified several shortcomings in how 'gender' is understood and implemented in SSR, and argued that a gendered transformation of the security sector must go beyond traditional understandings of gender balance and gender mainstreaming.[4] The article therefore poses the following research question: In what ways can external support to SSR contribute to gendering the security sector in conflict-affected countries, and what are the limitations? I define gender as the socially constructed roles and behaviours associated with men and women's biological sex,[5] while gender mainstreaming is understood as a global strategy or policy tool employed by organizations to achieve greater gender equality. Gender equality is defined as a situation where access to rights and opportunities are not affected by a person's gender.[6]

Building on research on norm translation in International Relations,[7] the article joins an ongoing discussion on the implementation and translation of the WPS agenda in diverse contexts.[8] It is often assumed that when

[2]Bagayoko, "Le Processus de Réforme"; Eickhoff, "Navigating Ownership"; Tull, "Rebuilding Mali's Army"; Cold-Ravnkilde and Nissen, "Schizophrenic Agendas"; Venturi and Toure, "The Great Illusion".
[3]DCAF, OSCE/ODIHR, UN Women, "A Security Sector Governance Approach," 2.
[4]Baaz and Utas, Beyond 'Gender and Stir'; Berlingozzi, "Gendered Insecurities"; Wilén, "Security Sector Reform"; Wilén, "Achieving a Gendered Transformation".
[5]Cohn, "Women and Wars," 4.
[6]Mobekk, "Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform," 279.
[7]Berger, Global Norms and Local Courts.; Zimmermann, Global Norms with a Local Face?; Zwingel, "How Do Norms Travel?".
[8]Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, "Translating UNSCR 1325"; Aroussi, "Strange Bedfellows"; Berlingozzi, "O Sister, Where Art Thou?"; Berlingozzi, "Gendered Insecurities".

international actors provide support to SSR, these will act as 'progressive promoters' of global gender equality norms, which then will clash with the norms of 'conservative local' actors.[9] Still, others have pointed out the paradox in the role of external actors, coming from male-dominated and gendered security sectors, in assisting post-conflict states' in gendering their security sectors.[10] Rather than understanding norms as something to be transferred from 'providers' to 'receivers', I understand norms and their meanings as dynamic, contested, and affected by the context in which they are used.[11] I study norm translation of the WPS agenda through an in-depth study of a capacity building project contributed by Norway to the UN Mission in Mali, highlighting the roles of deployed personnel and their counterparts, and the micro-level interactions that these engage in. I define norm translation as a multi-directional and 'open process of negotiation in which various actors in international, transnational and local contexts are involved'[12] and I combine Singh's insights on the WPS agenda and related norms as producing translations rather than transformations,[13] with feminist research on gender in SSR.

Between 2019 and 2022, a Norwegian-led Specialized Police Team provided capacity building in crime scene management to Malian Security Forces. The Norwegian officers collaborated directly with Malian officers, and were even co-located with their Malian counterparts, thus developing close working relationships (Fieldnotes 15.2.2022). This provides an excellent context for studying norm translation in a collaborative space. The analysis is based on 12 interviews with Norwegian and Malian police officers, 27 supporting interviews and conversations with actors working on SSR in Mali, observation at the offices of the 'Crime Scenes Directorate' in Bamako, as well as a collection of documents on the Specialized Police Team, WPS and SSR in Mali.

Few studies offer in-depth analysis of what happens when external actors provide support to SSR, since most existing research analyses relationships between Malian security actors and international partners at a political or strategic level. The article therefore fills a gap in the literature by providing an in-depth case study of a capacity-building initiative implemented as part of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA). Through its focus on the micro-level workings of a UN Specialized Police Team, this research also contributes to emerging scholarship on the day-to-day work within police missions and how police missions

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[9]Gordon, Welch, and Roos, "Security Sector Reform".
[10]Wilen, "Romanticising the Locals and the Externals?," 219.
[11]Wiener, "Contested Compliance," 201; Krook and True, "Rethinking the Life Cycles of International Norms," 106.
[12]Zwingel, "How Do Norms Travel?," 112.
[13]Singh, "In between the Ulemas and Local Warlords," 506.

develop on the ground, as well as the role of international policing in the (re)production of global order.[14]

The article proceeds with a background about the project and actors before outlining a framework for studying norm translation through different understandings of gender in SSR. I then present the methodology before I move on to the analysis. The analysis shows that despite gender equality not being a topic in the specific project aims, the Norwegian officers considered it their job to promote gender equality and women's participation, and this had also been an important part of their work. The possibilities for capacity building to contribute to a gendering of the security sector is however limited by the lack of more transformative understandings of gender to inform practice.

The MINUSMA Specialized Police Team on Crime Scene Management

The overarching aims of SSR are to make the security sector more effective, legitimate and accountable through a transformation of its institutions and actors. The main security actors involved in SSR include the military, the police, and other specialized branches such as the gendarmerie or intelligence services, as well as justice institutions, non-state and justice actors, and management and oversight bodies.[15] This study focuses mainly on the police, but in some cases refers to other branches associated with crime scene management. Since the 1990s, police participation in peacebuilding and stabilization missions has grown and become an integral part of such missions, fulfilling a range of tasks and roles.[16]

This article further zooms in on capacity building, one of the main areas of external support to SSR in Mali. The capacity building concept has been an integral part of the discourse on UN peace operations since the 1990s.[17] The term can have many meanings and uses, but in the context of UN policing, activities include day-to-day mentoring, advising host-State police on reform and restructuring, strategic planning, institution building, enhancing police capacity, and protection of civilians. These activities are further carried out as an integral part of broader peacekeeping missions, intended not only to improve technical capacity in a specific area, but also to contribute to promoting broader SSR.[18]

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[14]Neubauer, Friesendorf, and Schroeder, "Everyday Police Work Abroad"; Pingeot, *Police Peacekeeping*.
[15]Holvikivi, "What Role for the Security Sector?," 32; Mobekk, "Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform," 279; OECD, "DAC Guidelines and Reference Series".
[16]Hartz, "CIVPOL". Neubauer, Friesendorf, and Schroeder, "Everyday Police Work Abroad," 309.
[17]Wilén, "Capacity-Building," 338.
[18]Lackenbauer and Jonsson, "Implementing UNSCR 1325," 11; UNPOL, "Project Document".

MINUSMA represents the turn in UN peacekeeping toward more robust missions with stabilization and counter-terrorism tasks, and its mandate is broad and has changed since 2013 to reflect the political and security developments on the ground.[19] Within MINUSMA's mandate, UN Police provided support to the Malian Security Forces, including through the Serious and Organized Crime Support Unit (SOCSU), composed of Individual Police Officers and Specialized Police Teams. Specialized Police Teams are intended to facilitate the selection and recruitment of police experts nominated by Police Contributing Countries, and they work within UN Police field components and run specific projects in different areas of the host-State police's capacity building and protection of civilians. They provide targeted mentorship and technical advice to national counterparts and assist in the implementation of the projects, related to their areas of expertise.[20] The objective of the Specialized Police Team studied here was to enhance the capacity of the Malian Security Forces involved in crime scene management, by building and reinforcing their capabilities to effectively collect, process and store evidence from crime scenes and present these to the judiciary.[21] At the inception of the project, a joint assessment mission was conducted and a detailed project plan was created (Int. 3).

In the Malian Security Forces, crime scene management tasks are carried out by several entities, most notably in the national police and the gendarmerie. When the Specialized Police Team was established in 2019, they worked primarily with a unit in the National Police. Following efforts to centralize the capacity on crime scene management a new directorate was created in February 2021, the Direction Générale de la Police Technique Scientifique (hereafter 'Crime Scenes Directorate'). The Crime Scenes Directorate became operational in August 2021, and in March 2022 it consisted of about 55 staff, of which 8 were female. It is intended to function as a central national authority on forensic investigation and crime scene management, to serve the other parts of the Malian Security Forces, and has responsibility for capacity building on a national level. With its establishment, the focus of the work of the Specialized Police Team moved to the Crime Scenes Directorate, and it was decided that it should be the focal point for the collaboration. Many of the technical officers from the National Police transferred to the new directorate and had thus been involved in the previous work of the Specialized Police Team. Others were new recruits, who did not have training or experience in crime scene management. In addition to training and capacity building, the activities of the Crime Scenes Directorate involve managing crime scenes and collecting and processing evidence,

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[19]Karlsrud, "Towards UN Counter-Terrorism Operations?"; MINUSMAs operations in Mali ended on 31.12.2023, after Malian authorities requested the withdrawal of the mission on 16.6.2023.
[20]UNPOL, "Project Document".
[21]Ibid.

identification work, particularly of detainees in Malian prisons, and consulting on cases on the request of other entities in the Malian Security Forces or the justice institutions (Interviews, Bamako, 2022).

Translating the WPS Agenda

Studies on the translation of the WPS agenda into national or local contexts have addressed the challenges involved in its practical implementation, highlighting that WPS norms often lead to translations (such as increases in the number of women) but not transformations.[22] This has been done by pointing out how localization through National Action Plans on WPS perpetuate the status quo and reinforce existing global hierarchies, and that NAPs are not used as instruments for greater societal transformation.[23] Others have shown how gender mainstreaming in practice often lead to a homogenizing and stereotyping of women's identities and roles as security actors, and falls short of more transformative feminist goals of subverting patriarchal structures and empowering women.[24] I join this literature by drawing on the IR literature on norms.

IR research on norms has been key in demonstrating the importance of norms in international politics. Scholars in this field developed influential models to describe international norm dynamics, such as the 'norm life cycle' model.[25] In these early studies, norms were understood as having fixed meanings which influenced the behaviour of different actors in the international system. More recent contributions have moved from a view of static norms being diffused from centre to periphery in the international system, to a more processual understanding of norms and how these travel between different contexts. This has involved paying attention to 'the agency of the governed'[26] and the roles of so-called 'local' actors or 'receivers' of norms, through the application of concepts focusing on norm localization, translation, and contestation.[27]

In this article I focus on how norms and ideas about gender embedded in the WPS agenda are translated in capacity building and collaboration over SSR in Mali. I define norm translation as a multi-directional and 'open process of negotiation in which various actors in international, transnational and local contexts are involved.'[28]

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[22]Singh, "In between the Ulemas and Local Warlords," 506.

[23]Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, "Translating UNSCR 1325"; Haastrup and Hagen, "Global Racial Hierarchies".

[24]Berlingozzi, "O Sister, Where Art Thou?"; Berlingozzi, "Gendered Insecurities"; Lorentzen, "Women as "New Security Actors"".

[25]Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics"; Risse, Ropp, and Sikkink, *The Power of Human Rights:*

[26]Draude, "The Agency of the Governed".

[27]Acharya, "How Ideas Spread"; Berger, *Global Norms and Local Courts.*; Wiener, "Contested Compliance"; Zimmermann, *Global Norms with a Local Face?*; Zwingel, "How Do Norms Travel?".

[28]Zwingel, "How Do Norms Travel?," 112.

The article focuses specifically on gender equality norms, which represent a consensus on how to go about reaching the goal of gender equality (for example strategies such as gender mainstreaming or gender balancing). Given its formalization in numerous UN Security Council resolutions, the Women, Peace and Security agenda can be considered an example of how, when particular ideas about gender equality become formalized in legal documents, they take on a more fixed definition.

Norms are usually defined as 'standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity.'[29] However, the research presented here rests on an understanding of norms as contested processes characterized by their ongoing constitution,[30] as shaped by the contexts in which they are used, and by the meanings that actors in those contexts attach to norms.[31] Instead of focusing on the structural aspects of circulation, I focus on a contextualized analysis of how norms are translated, and their meanings co-created, as part of everyday interactions between differently positioned actors.[32] The implication of this is that I focus on outcomes of norm translation not in terms of adoption, adaptation or rejection of norms,[33] but as the shared understandings of gender that are produced through the interactions between actors involved in SSR. In the following section, I therefore review understandings of gender that have been identified in the literature on gender and SSR.

Understandings of Gender in SSR

Broader SSR processes in conflict-affected countries have traditionally involved efforts at gendering the security sector, through a focus on gender balance and gender mainstreaming, including the application of gender perspectives and a more transformative approach to reform.[34] The focus on gender balance and gender mainstreaming can also be found in UNSC resolution 1325, which urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all UN peace and security efforts.[35]

Despite these relatively broad and transformative goals, feminist scholars have cautioned that gender becomes an add-on for later rather than an integrated part of SSR,[36] and pointed out how the security sector consists of

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[29]Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics," 891.
[30]Wiener, "Contested Compliance"; Krook and True, "Rethinking the Life Cycles".
[31]Lorentzen, "Normative Encounters," 30.
[32]Pingeot, *Police Peacekeeping*, 20.
[33]Finnemore and Sikkink, "International Norm Dynamics"; Acharya, "How Ideas Spread".
[34]Mobekk, "Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform," 279.
[35]United Nations, "Security Council Resolution 1325".
[36]Hudson, "A Double-Edged Sword of Peace?"; Baaz and Utas, *Beyond 'Gender and Stir'*; Wilén, "Security Sector Reform".

'gendered institutions', ruled by a specific type of heterosexual masculinity and a patriarchal social order consisting of a hierarchical arrangement of social, economic, and political structures that privilege attributes that are associated with masculinity over those associated with femininity.[37] Scholarship on gender and SSR identifies several shortcomings in how gender is understood and implemented in SSR.

Gender balance (or gender integration) in this context refers to the recruitment and retention of female personnel, with the aim to increase the number of women in the security forces. It is based on a presumption that adding more women to the security sector will contribute to countering sexist and violent behaviour and render the security sector more efficient. This strategy is often referred to as 'add women and stir' by its critics, who argue that it not only conflates gender with women, but also places an undue burden on women's shoulders: By virtue of specific capacities they possess because of their gender, they are expected to transform deeply gendered institutions.[38]

Critics have further pointed to how this view instrumentalises and essentialises women, and shown the disempowering effects of universalist conceptions of women, gender and women's agency that dominate in liberal peacebuilding discourse.[39] For example, Holvikivi shows that UN peacekeeping training discourse establishes an understanding of gender as vulnerability to sexual violence, and as a question of skills and capacities rather than political investments or moral values.[40]

The focus on gender balance and related debates highlights different understandings of gender visible in the way institutions work on gender. When the focus is on inserting more women into areas of exclusion, this points to an understanding of gender as 'sameness', in which it is assumed that neutrality between men and women will achieve equality. The idea of women bringing specific capacities points to an understanding of gender as 'difference', in which women's traditional roles are brought into focus and it is assumed that revaluing and promoting their contributions as distinct will achieve equality.[41]

These debates further relate to broader discussions about gender mainstreaming and its practical and theoretical meaning(s). Despite a consistent lack of conceptual clarity, gender mainstreaming has been widely promoted by international organizations, including the UN.[42] Originally a feminist

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[37]Kronsell, *Gender, Sex and the Postnational Defense*; Ní Aoláin, Haynes, and Cahn, *On the Frontlines*, 62.
[38]Baaz and Utas, *Beyond 'Gender and Stir'*; Dharmapuri, "Just Add Women and Stir?"; Mobekk, "Gender, Women and Security Sector Reform".
[39]Hudson, "A Double-Edged Sword of Peace?"; Wilén, "Security Sector Reform"; Berlingozzi, "Gendered Insecurities".
[40]Holvikivi, "Training the Troops on Gender".
[41]Ansorg and Haastrup, "Gender and the EU's Support," 1132; True and Parisi, "Gender Mainstreaming Strategies," 39–40.
[42]Daly, "Gender Mainstreaming," 434.

strategy designed to obtain greater gender equality, in its practical implementation it has often diminished or depoliticized gender equality goals.[43] In a publication from 2020, UN Women defines gender mainstreaming as 'the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels'.[44] As the title of the publication indicates, gender mainstreaming is to be understood as a global strategy or policy tool, with the ultimate goal to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In SSR, the traditional understanding of gender mainstreaming focuses on reform within existing structures, as shown above.

Feminist scholars however argue that a gendered transformation of the security sector would require revisiting these (gendered) structures themselves.[45] This indicates a more radical understanding of gender as 'transformation', that challenges existing frameworks, and calls for a transformation of existing structures and systems of governance, and of gender relations, so that a new order can emerge to replace the existing (patriarchal) one.[46] However, as Wilen has pointed out, focusing exclusively on the security sector and its institutions is not sufficient to achieve such a gendered transformation. Rather, a gendered transformation requires also considering how the private and public spheres intersect and mutually influence one another. This refers to how women's roles and experiences in the private sphere, including their social and cultural obligations, gender inequality and structural violence, impact upon their work in the public sphere.[47] A transformative understanding of gender should thus address how its structuring power penetrates all aspects of social life and social interactions, and their interdependence.

Finally, a transformative approach would not only consider how women's roles and experiences in the private sphere impact upon their work in the public sphere, but also the extent to which women's roles and experiences are shaped by intersections of gender, religion, and broader class-based identities.[48] Feminist scholarship has pointed out that gender is usually not mainstreamed in an intersectional way. Rather, gender becomes a synonym for women, and of the experiences of dominant or elite women, through the homogenizing and stereotyping of women's roles and identities.[49] An understanding of gender as 'intersectionality', however, implies that women's

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[43]True and Parisi, "Gender Mainstreaming Strategies," 40.
[44]UN Women, "Gender Mainstreaming," 2.
[45]Wilén, "Achieving a Gendered Transformation," 88.
[46]Ansorg and Haastrup, "Gender and the EU's Support," 1132.
[47]Wilén, "Achieving a Gendered Transformation," 87.
[48]Yuval-Davis, "Intersectionality and Feminist Politics".
[49]Berlingozzi, "O Sister, Where Art Thou?"; Berlingozzi, "Gendered Insecurities"; Lorentzen, "Women as "New Security Actors""; True and Parisi, "Gender Mainstreaming Strategies," 42.

multiple and intersecting identities are considered in gender mainstreaming practice.[50]

Methodology

The research was carried out in February and March 2022, and was designed as a case study of the Specialized Police Team contributed by Norway to MINUSMA. This choice was motivated by several factors: First, capacity building has been one of the most important aspects of external support to SSR in Mali. Further, my background as a Norwegian researcher facilitated access to information and interviewees. This was important because it has been challenging to conduct research on external support to SSR in Mali after the most recent coup d'état in 2021. The choice to focus on a project on crime scene management was motivated by the belief that to answer the question of how SSR can contribute to implementing the WPS agenda, it is necessary to look beyond projects that focus (mainly) on gender.

Data was collected from several sources using various qualitative methods, including 12 interviews with Norwegian and Malian police officers, 27 supporting interviews and conversations with actors working on SSR in Mali,[51] the UNPOL project documents and action plan, official documents on WPS and/or SSR in Mali, and observation at the Crime Scenes Directorate in Bamako.

Among the Norwegian police who had been involved in setting up and leading the Specialized Police Team, four officers were interviewed, including the team leader, a special adviser, a team member who were part of the Specialized Police Team at the time of research, and one former team leader (all male). The selection of interviewees was limited by who was available at the time, and their willingness to participate in the research. The project had two French instructors on the team who conducted trainings outside of Bamako, who were not available for interviews at the time of research. Further, the Specialized Police Team did not have any women on the team at the time of research, and one team member declined the invitation to participate in the research.

The interviews with the Malian Security Forces included the director of the unit (male), two senior officers (one male, one female), and five junior officers (three male, two female). While the pool of Malian officers was relatively small, it did allow for purposeful selection of both male and female officers, different ranks, and officers who had worked with and participated in the trainings organized by the Specialized Police Team.

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[50]True and Parisi, "Gender Mainstreaming Strategies," 40.
[51]Including the EU Capacity Building Mission Sahel Mali; EU Training Mission Mali; Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - DCAF Mali; Institute for Security Studies; MINUSMA; Center for Civilians in Conflict; Western diplomats/defence attachés.

The interviews with the Norwegian and Malian officers focused on descriptions and perceptions of classroom/training situations, mutual collaboration, and the day-to-day work, including the tasks this involves and the division of labour (incl. between men and women). All research participants were given an information letter about the research, which also contained information about confidentiality and informed consent. This information was also repeated orally at the beginning of the interview, before consent was given.[52] I have anonymized the identities of all the participants, however, complete anonymity is difficult given the small size of the units involved.

During fieldwork in Bamako I had a number of interviews and conversations with various actors working on SSR in Mali. This provided useful background information about the context, how external actors work on SSR in Mali, on collaboration between different actors, and the challenges related to this work. I also visited the premises of the Crime Scene Directorate several times, and this gave me the opportunity to observe the ongoing work as well as the interactions between the Norwegian and Malian officers. I recorded my observations using fieldnotes, which together with the interviews, informal conversations, and documents, form the basis for my analysis.

The analysis of translation of the WPS agenda was done by identification of different understandings of gender in the material. Following feminist methodologies that asks us to look for silences,[53] I also address the understandings of gender that are absent from the material, and the implications of this for the potential for SSR to contribute to a truly gendered transformation of the security sector. I contextualize the findings from the interviews with my observations, supporting interviews and conversations, documents, as well as relevant literature.

The use of participatory methods (interviews and observation) and close engagement with the material warrants a reflection on researcher positionality. When conducting qualitative research involving interaction between the researcher and the researched, positionality refers to 'the perspective, orientation and situatedness of the researcher vis-à-vis the researchees.'[54] I recognize my positionality as fluid, meaning that my positionality varies depending on whether I am interviewing a Norwegian or Malian officer, a high-level or a junior officer, a man or a woman (etc.).[55] One example of how my positionality affected the research is how my identity as Norwegian

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[52]Ethics approval for the research project has been obtained from Etikprövningsmyndigheten Dnr 2022-04289-01.
[53]Björkdahl and Mannergren Selimovic, "Feminist Ethnographic Research".
[54]Henry, Higate, and Sanghera, "Positionality and Power," 468.
[55]Soedirgo and Glas, "Toward Active Reflexivity," 528.

eased access to the Norwegian interviewees. Their trust in me, and their willingness to introduce me to their Malian colleagues, was further necessary to be able to conduct interviews with Malian officers.

Another example of how I reflected upon my positionality throughout the research process is the relatively common expectation that women will be more open with me because I am a woman.[56] In fact, what I experienced during interviews was quite the opposite. While both men and women insisted that there were no differences between men and women at work, these statements were more often nuanced in my conversations with male interviewees. The women I interviewed displayed a stronger need to show that there is 'no problem', elaborating or nuancing these statements to a lesser degree. To go beyond such generic statements, I asked interviewees about the details of their everyday work, specific tasks, how they shared the work, etc.

This also necessitated a reflection on what made these women respond the way that they did, and how they viewed my positionality. Was it perhaps other aspects of my identity than being a woman (such as being a Western foreigner, or my education) that was more important in influencing how they responded? Did my identity as a woman have a different influence on the women I interviewed, compared to the men? In the analysis, I have tried to continuously consider how responses will necessarily be affected by the research topic and my positionality, and how this generates empirical data where some things are emphasized, while others are left out. This means that, while I never used an interpreter and the conversations took place in private with only myself and the interviewee present, my positionality as well as that of the interviewees necessarily influenced the findings in different ways. As a result, the research findings are specific and contingent to the context and the limitations discussed above.

Translations of Gender in the SPT and the Malian Security Forces

In this section I analyse the translation of the WPS agenda in the capacity building and collaboration between the Norwegian and Malian officers. The analysis presented below identifies understandings of gender as knowledge, as representation, as sameness, and as difference, which are associated with a 'traditional' approach to gender mainstreaming in SSR, and shows how these contributed to the implementation of the WPS agenda and gender norms in the context of external support to SSR in Mali.

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[56]Riessmann, "When Gender Is Not Enough. Women Interviewing Women"; Soedirgo and Glas, "Toward Active Reflexivity".

Gender as Knowledge

Norway has a history of contributing police components to international peacekeeping missions, including in Kosovo, South Sudan, Afghanistan, and a Specialized Police Mission in Haiti,[57] and considers itself as a champion on the WPS agenda and has been a steady supporter of the agenda at the UN.[58] Despite this, the project document contains no references to gender or the WPS agenda.

In interviews the Norwegian officers talked about gender and women in the police as something that they had actively worked to promote as part of their work in the Specialized Police Team, and they displayed an awareness of the role of Norway as a promoter of gender equality globally. In doing so, they referred to the UN and MINUSMA's mandate, as well as their own backgrounds. From the interviews, it was clear that the interviewed officers considered the gender perspective as an integrated part of their work. The current team leader explained: 'I don't think the project plan has much mention of women. Maybe it should. We take it for granted, it is a part of the way we work.' (Int. 1). When describing how they had worked to establish the Specialized Police Team, the former team leader explained how he had emphasized to the UN staff in New York that 'Norway is a 1325-country, so that has to be there as an over-arching umbrella for everything we do. Gender equality, human rights, anti-corruption, etc.' (Int. 3). The interviewed Norwegian officers thus considered it to be part of their job to promote gender equality through their capacity building activities.

This can also be observed in a description of the induction-training the Norwegian officers attended when they arrived in MINUSMA:

> At the beginning of our stay here, we had training through the UN. It's three weeks of induction training with courses in different things, there was a lot of focus on gender, gender equality, sexual violence and all that. And a lot of this is common sense for us. When you come from Norway where things are very equal, and then you come here, and you pick up people from all parts of the world, you have to start at the bottom in a way. A lot is very obvious to us. (Int. 4).

The quote illustrates how this interviewee considers gender as 'common sense for us' and signals that as Norwegian officers, they arrive with a different background and knowledge than many other nationalities. This reflects how since the early 1990s, the Norwegian self-image as a gender-equal nation has come to be seen as a Norwegian value.[59] It is therefore not surprising that the Norwegian officers may bring these norms with

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[57]Tøraasen, "The Future of UN Policing?"; UNPOL, "Project Document".
[58]Skjelsbæk and Tryggestad, "Donor States Delivering on WPS".
[59]Skjelsbæk and Tryggestad, "Pro-Gender Norms in Norwegian Peace Engagement: Balancing Experiences, Values, and Interests," 182.

them from their own national and professional context, and that this influences their work.

The self-image as a gender-equal nation is potentially reinforced by the fact that women's representation in the Norwegian Police is 47% overall, and 35% of uniformed personnel. In 2021, 60% of the new recruits to the Norwegian police academy were women. There has also been a steady increase in women occupying senior positions over the past years as a result of targeted efforts.[60] In contrast, female representation in the Malian Security Forces is considerably lower. In 2014, women represented 7% of personnel in the army, and less than 3% of the staff of the Gendarmerie. The numbers are a little higher in the police, where women accounted for 13.7% of staff and 11.1% of senior staff in 2017.[61]

In interviews with Malian officers, they to a large degree accepted and reproduced the idea of the Norwegian officers as 'providers' of global gender equality norms. One of the senior Malian officers interviewed emphasized that 'before the arrival of the Norwegians it was not like that. The arrival of the Norwegians, really, has given more value to women' (Int. 6). This reflects an understanding of gender as knowledge, skills or capabilities, which can be transferred through capacity building and training.[62] As will be shown below, the fact that the Norwegians possess this knowledge and considered it their job to promote gender in their work, allowed for promotion of the WPS agenda despite the absence of references to gender, gender mainstreaming or the WPS agenda in the project documents.

Gender as Representation

On my first visit to the offices of the Crime Scene Directorate, I arrived together with the Norwegian officers who had invited me to come along and to introduce me. As we entered the building, we passed a small group who were doing an exercise in collection of fingerprints outside in the courtyard. Continuing to enter the building, there were offices on the left, and a classroom on the right, and I could see that there was a training going on inside. We entered the classroom and observed the training session that was taking place. A young man was talking and explaining different techniques to collect evidence from crime scenes, using a PowerPoint with descriptions and images. Another young man was standing on the side, and the class was facing them. I noticed that there was one female among the participants. I sat in the back of the room together with two of the Norwegian officers (Fieldnotes 17.2.2022).

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[60]Politidirektoratet, "Politiets Årsrapport 2021," 54.
[61]DCAF/ISSAT, "Mali SSR Background Note"; Triquet and Serrano, "Gender and the Security Sector".
[62]Holvikivi, "Training the Troops on Gender," 189.

In all interviews and conversations on gender and SSR in Mali, women's participation or representation was usually a key topic. This is not surprising given the centrality of this understanding of gender in the literature and in the WPS agenda. At the national level, several policies with relevance for gender-based reforms in the security sector exist, including the National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2019-2023, in which SSR is a key element, particularly under the pillar on protection. Here, women's active participation (including as female personnel) in defence, security and justice institutions, as well as the need for SSR to take gender into account, is highlighted.[63]

The conversations with the Norwegian officers often started with the topic of women's participation in the training courses they were offering to the Malian Police, and they highlighted how they were not the ones that made the final decisions about who the participants would be. However, they also described different practices or strategies they used to influence these decisions and promote women's representation among course participants. For example, when they decided to give a course, this had to be reported to a training section within MINUSMA, who would then send out invitations. When doing so, they could make requests, such as asking that half of the participants were recruited from the gendarmerie (Int. 2). They explained that they always asked for 50% women to attend the courses, but that this goal was never met. The understanding of gender as representation can here be seen as reflected in active measures taken to increase women's participation in trainings courses offered.

Given that about 20% of the course participants in 2021 were women (Int. 2), there did not seem to be much direct or outspoken resistance to nominating women to attend trainings. Rather, the Malian officers also emphasized the extent to which they worked to promote women and gender equality. The director explained that even though the organization lacked a gender policy, two out of six high-ranking officers were women: They had appointed a woman as head of the ballistics division, and a woman as chief of staff. Of the approximately 40 junior officers, he said there were seven women. He emphasized that he encouraged the participation of women, and that he was trying to include women in his organization. The understanding of gender as representation was thus widely shared and easily identifiable in the material.

Gender as Sameness

The understanding of gender as sameness, in which it is assumed that neutrality between men and women will achieve equality,[64] was one of the

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[63]République du Mali, "Plan d'Action National".
[64]Ansorg and Haastrup, "Gender and the EU's Support," 1132.

dominating understandings in the material. When it came to classroom situations, the Norwegian officers were clear that they 'did not get the impression that the male participants underestimated the women in the room' (Int. 3), and there was a general consensus that 'it is rather the discrepancies between rank and experience that limits participation in the classroom, not gender' (Int. 2). The junior Malian officers who were part of the training of trainers-programme also emphasized rank more than gender in creating challenges in the classroom. When asked whether it changes anything to have a woman on the teaching team, another interviewee also emphasized that the women 'here' never had any problems (Int. 10). Also, he had never observed any resistance in a teaching situation towards a female instructor. The challenges, he explained, had to do with rank (Int. 10).

When asked whether the dynamic changes when women are also present in the classroom, a female junior officer and instructor stated: 'I don't think it changes anything. It is always the same because there are also women who are shy. Even if they are there, they will not participate actively. But then there are those that are very active. In my view, it is more or less the same.' (Int. 9). Similar ideas were reflected in interviews with the Malian officers when asked whether there was any difference between having a male or female co-instructor. One male interviewee answered: 'It depends on their engagement. With that, there is a big difference, whether it is a man or a woman. It must be said that, there are women who explain better than us men' (Int. 11). Among interviewees there was thus a general consensus that rank was more important than gender, and that men and women of similar rank faced similar challenges.

Malian interviewees also talked about how they perceived the changes that the collaboration had brought. A junior female officer who was part of the training of trainers-programme, and who had been a crime scene technician and instructor even before the arrival of the Norwegian team, explained the changes she had seen: 'Yes, something changed after the Norwegians arrived, there have been more trainings than before.' (Int. 9). Others noted changes in the roles and position of women. Several of the MFS officers highlighted how the Norwegian officers had always emphasized the importance of having female participants at the trainings (Int. 6, 9, 10 and 11). One of the junior male officers interviewed also noted that now he and his female colleagues all had the same level of training: 'they emphasise that there should be women among the participants. So I think … with women colleagues, we all have the same training' (Int. 11). Here, the understanding of gender as sameness is reflected in how women and men can be expected to perform the same tasks if they have received the same training or have similar levels of knowledge and experience.

This understanding of gender is also reflected in the ways the Norwegian officers worked to make sure that male and female officers were given the

same opportunities. One such example concerned how in a team of two trainers, one a senior male and the other a junior female, it had happened that the senior officer ran the whole show and the woman ended up simply controlling the PowerPoint slides. When the younger male and female officers gave courses together however, this did not seem to be a problem. In response, they therefore started to prioritize the junior officers as trainers (Int. 2). In this example, the Norwegian officers worked actively and creatively to promote the WPS agenda through their work based on the understanding that women should have the same opportunities and training as their male colleagues.

Gender as Difference

Contrary to the how the Norwegian officers had little influence over the selection of participants, they had more influence over who would be chosen as instructors and who would be part of the training of trainers-programme (Int. 1, 2 and 4). The training of trainers-programme was an initiative to gradually transfer the responsibility of carrying out the trainings to the Malian Security Forces, by recruiting trainers from the pool of former participants and mentoring and supporting these. When talking about the selection of instructors, one of the Norwegian officers explained that they had two main concerns with regards to the gender perspective; On the one hand, the instructors needed to have the necessary level of competence, to safeguard the integrity of the project. On the other hand, they wanted to have women represented. He continued:

> And then we want a representation of women in the instructor pool, because we know it's healthy for the instructor pool (to include women). And they [women] can contribute a lot of reflections and thoughts, and much that men cannot. Especially in a society that has such divided gender roles as you have here, we believe that it is very valuable to have those assessments. (Int. 4).

This statement, which he phrased as 'our' way of thinking, reflects an understanding of gender as difference and emphasizes the specific qualities that women bring (and which are different from what men bring). It further explains how this understanding of gender is rooted in a specific way of thinking subscribed to by the team, Norway, or the Norwegian Police, which forms the basis for how they promote gender equality in their work.

Another variation of the understanding of gender as difference can be seen in the division of labour when the Malian officers arrive at a crime scene to conduct an investigation. In the interviews with junior officers, these gave rich descriptions of how this work was conducted and the division

of tasks at a crime scene (Interviews 10–11 and 6). Upon arrival at a crime scene, there is always a division of labour that takes place, according to the roles that are necessary to fill. According to the interviewees, there are no predetermined roles, everyone can fill any role, and who does what changes from intervention to intervention. There is usually a leader, a note-taker, a photographer, the 'main-sale' (who collects the evidence on the scene), one custodian of the materials collected, and, in the cases where there is a body on the scene, one person will be responsible for handling the body. At a crime scene, who gets which task depends on several things, and in many cases the division of labour did not appear to be gendered. One interviewee explained that 'Often it depends on the competence of the woman who is there. Because they all have their specialization. We use them accordingly.' (Int. 10).

However, who gets what task can also depend on other things. If the crime scene involves a dead body, it depends whether the victim is male or female. Several of the interviewees explained that if there was a female victim, it would usually be a woman who would handle the body and the related evidence at the scene or at the morgue (Int. 6 and 10). It was thus seen as an advantage to have women on the team, 'especially if the victim is a girl' (Int. 10). Again we see the understanding of gender as difference reflected in what and how women are expected to contribute, and how women possess qualities or competences that are different from those of men. While the Norwegian officers are more vague about what this might entail, in both examples gender is about revaluing feminine qualities, and achieving greater gender equality through such a revaluing.[65]

Gendered Transformations? The Limits of 'Traditional' Understandings of Gender

While understandings of gender as knowledge, representation, sameness, and difference were clearly identifiable in the material, there was a lack of evidence of a more transformative understanding of gender, of the kind that would lead to a gendered transformation of the security sector. As the analysis shows, the specific understandings of gender and an awareness of representing a gender-equal nation, underpin an approach similar to what feminist scholars have referred to as 'traditional' approaches to gender mainstreaming in SSR.[66] The understandings of gender discussed above enabled several instances of promotion of norms embedded in the WPS agenda through the capacity building activities carried out by the Specialized

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[65]Ansorg and Haastrup, 1132.
[66]Wilén, "Achieving a Gendered Transformation".

Police Team, but only to a certain extent. By looking at the issues that were not addressed, which I refer to as 'silences' below, I analyse the limitations of this approach.

Silences on how Societal Gender Norms Affect Women's Choices and Roles in the Workplace

While no formal barriers exist which limit what kind of work women can do in the Malian police or the Crime Scenes Directorate, the data revealed certain differences in what kind of work is more commonly carried out by men and women. These differences are often rooted in societal and cultural gender norms, and in this section I analyse the limitations of the 'traditional' approach identified above in addressing how such societal gender norms affect women's choices and their roles in the workplace.

Among the Malian officers that I interviewed, there was a narrative that was repeated in all the interviews about how 'everybody does everything' here, and there being no difference between men and women at work. These statements were however nuanced in interviews with Malian officers, where they talked extensively about their day-to-day work, the tasks that this consists of, and how those tasks are divided between different individuals in the organization. One example of this is related to the division of labour at crime scenes, where one junior officer explained that 'if I am at a crime scene with a woman, I will often do the 'main-sale'.[67] Here in Africa, we respect women a lot, it is a function of that. It is my way of seeing things. The woman, she is always proper.' (Int. 10). Despite strong statements about there being no men and women's work, this reveals differences in what tasks are perceived as appropriate for women. Societal gender norms vary across regions in Mali, but among the mainly Bambara populations in the south, including Bamako and surrounding areas, gender norms tend to place economic and decision-making power in the hands of men, and to identify the place of women in the home rather than in the public sphere.[68] Women in the bigger cities or those who come from wealthier backgrounds may have more choices than women in rural areas or those from different socio-economic backgrounds. However, even women in Bamako who work outside the home tend to accept a set of gender relations which gives women less autonomy while the man provides economic protection (even in situations where women are increasingly contributing towards household expenses).[69]

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[67]The agent who collects the indices and evidence at the scene, and in the case of a dead body will also be the one to move and undress the cadaver etc.
[68]Schulz, *Culture and Customs of Mali*, 129–30.
[69]Diallo, "Women in the Back Seat"; Whitehouse, "Patriarchal Anxieties," 4–6.

Interviewees showed great appreciation of and respect for their female colleagues, saying that 'It depends on the engagement of the woman. All women are not equally motivated. The same with men. All men are not equally motivated. When a woman is motivated, there are no problems. She can work very well' (int 11). Several statements further served to explain cultural gendered patterns of behaviour particular to the Malian context. For example, I was told that 'here, the women have a tendency to leave things for the men.' (Int. 10). Further, one interviewee explained that 'In general women don't like technical work. All work that is tiring, women don't like that.' (Int. 8). Statements about women being like 'this' or 'that', ignores how even wealthy women are responsible for an unproportionally large part of domestic and family duties.[70] It further reflects a conflation of women's identities and a disregard for the way women's roles and experiences are shaped by their multiple and overlapping identities. A more transformative approach would go beyond building the capacity of women, to also take into account women's multiple and intersecting identities and seek to address how the structuring power of gender penetrates all aspects of social life and social interactions.

When I was observing a training at the Crime Scenes Directorate, one of the Norwegian officers remarked upon the outfit of one woman who participated in the training we were observing. She was wearing a formal attire, with black trousers, a white shirt, and high heels. He explained that female officers often arrived in very unpractical clothing, even when they had been told that there was going to be practical exercises (Fieldnotes 17.2.2022). In a very practical way, women's outfits then become an obstacle to women doing the same things as men, in this case getting the same experience and practical training. As challenging as it may be, a more transformative understanding of gender would need to begin addressing how cultural expectations affect women's choices to, for example, dress in a certain way.

Malian interviewees described their practices of promoting women as setting them apart from other parts of the service and of society, saying that 'In our service here at the [Crime Scenes Directorate], the women are deployed' (Int. 11). The director also stated that 'The habit of leaving women on the side, we don't do that here' (Int. 1), signalling that leaving women on the side is a prevalent practice in other places. It is worth noting that the Crime Scenes Directorate is potentially more available to women, since they do more technical work, processing crime scenes and evidence, and offering training. This is illustrated by the experience of one interviewee who transferred from a more operational unit, and who explained that she had come to the Crime Scenes Directorate to do 'research' (Int. 12). Further, when asked about her personal life, she answered that she

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[70]Tounkara, *Femmes et discriminations au Mali*; Whitehouse, "Patriarchal Anxieties," 5.

was ready to meet her husband and start a family soon. This is an example of how the types of work that are seen as appropriate for women can also affect women's choices regarding which parts of the public sector or the type of work they choose to take up, even if it does not exclude them from participating *per se*. From the data, it was thus clear that societal gender norms governing women's roles in the community or family can affect the choices women make, as well as the roles they are given or expected to fill, and the expectations towards them in the workplace.

Silences on how Societal Gender Norms Affects Women's Participation in the Public Sphere

The examples above show how societal gender norms can affect women's choices and behaviour, and which roles they are assigned and expected to fill, in the workplace. Malian junior male officers often attributed differences in gender roles in the workplace to the fact that there were so few women: 'Unfortunately there are not enough women.. Generally, in our society women stay at home, not working. But now this is changing, you have more women who are working now.' (Int. 8). While societal gender norms may keep women away from the public sphere completely, the data analysed here shows how this also happens in discreet and partial ways.

In interviews with the Norwegian officers, they expressed some concern that female officers were being trained to investigate crime scenes, but then would end up with secretarial tasks such as making coffee, and never actually being dispatched to a crime scene (Int. 2 and 4). However, when I talked to the Malian officers, those officers that had longer experience working as crime scene investigators explained that they had all either worked a crime scene as a woman or conducted crime scene investigations together with women in the past (Int. 8 and 10). One female officer described how she had 'been to quite a lot of crime scenes. Scenes where there have been killings, robberies … ' (Int. 9). As mentioned, the Crime Scenes Directorate is a relatively new unit, and in the time the unit had been operational it had conducted only a limited number of crime scene investigations (Int. 6, 9 and 8).

Two issues were key for understanding to what extent female officers are deployed to crime scenes. The first has to do with how the junior officers are rotate between being on call in the office and ready to depart to a crime scene and being deployed to prisons conducting identification work. One of the junior officers explained that 'the time when I was deployed to a crime scene, it happened to be that at the time that the woman was deployed to the prison.' (Int. 11). If they are on duty in one of the prisons at the time when a team is called to intervene at a crime scene, they will be hindered from participating. Given that both male and female officers deploy to

prisons this appears less significant, apart from the fact that there are fewer women in the service to start with.

Second, the time of the call for a crime scene intervention may affect who is sent to investigate. This is more significant for understanding how societal gender norms in the private sphere may affect women's participation in the public sphere. As one junior male officer explained: 'It was late at night, so the women could not go. The other day we were there at 10 pm. In general the women are married, and you know, here we have the social.. so often we leave them with their families. So outside of working hours, it is the men who will be called upon.' (Int. 8). The only two interventions that he had participated in so far at the new unit had both taken place at night, which meant that women could not go (Int. 8). This points to an important tension between the private and professional spheres, how women's roles in the private sphere impacts on their work, and how, as a consequence, women may be partially excluded from the public sphere.

These findings also highlight limitations in the extensive focus on gender as representation in policy and practice on gender and SSR. As shown above, both Malian and Norwegian interviewees also put a lot of emphasis on increasing the number of women in work settings. When gender is used as a synonym for women's inclusion, this usually leads to a focus on the experiences of dominant rather than marginalized groups of women. Mainstreaming gender in an intersectional and transformative way would however require considering not only how individuals have different identities that overlap, but the oppressions that happen at these intersections. For example, it would entail looking into how women's identities as wives and mothers intersects with their identities as members of a religious, social or ethnic group or class, and what kind of discriminations are produced at these intersections.

Silences on Depoliticization of Gender and Gender Discrimination

The data and analysis show that the Norwegian officers see themselves as possessing knowledge and competence on gender and consider it their job to promote or transfer this to their Malian counterparts. They sometimes assume that the Malian officers and institutions do not possess or practice knowledge on gender. The Malian officers both accept and contest this image: On the one hand they state that they have learned a lot from the Norwegians, while on the other emphasizing how they work to promote women and gender equality. While the understanding of gender as knowledge can support the implementation of WPS agenda as shown above, it also poses some limits to its transformative potential.

One way this can happen is through the depoliticization of gender and gender discrimination. Hearing from women themselves, one female

trainer that I interviewed explained that 'there are certain men who think that.. When they see that it is a woman who is there and who is giving the training, they feel a bit "minimized", but then it passes (…) When you have the knowledge and competence, then you can do a good job, and gradually, they will respect you.' (Int. 9). However, similarly to her male colleagues she emphasized the challenges related to rank more than gender. While she feels that gender discrimination can be overcome by demonstration of knowledge and skills, it is nonetheless something that she has encountered in her work. Despite the consensus among male and female interviewees that rank was more important than gender, this understanding of gender as sameness again poses some important limitations on the potential for a gendered transformation of the security sector. In theory, it puts women on equal footing with men of similar rank. However, given that women more often than men occupy the lower ranks, this issue presumably affects women to a larger degree than men. Further, the emphasis on rank as more important than gender downplays the relevance of the gender discrimination that women are exposed to and contributes to depoliticizing gender.

In fact, some male interviewees stated that there are advantages to being a woman, because it is easier for women than for men to deal with the challenges in the classroom: 'it is even easier for women to overcome these problems. It's like I said before, we have a lot of respect for women here.' (Int. 10). Another junior male officer also said that 'People have a tendency to respect women, more than men. It is our society that incurs this. People are more tolerant with women than with men. More respectful.' (Int. 11). These officers are referring to societal gender norms that they claim give women more respect. Regardless of whether their female colleagues share this view, these statements highlight the limitations of an understanding of gender as difference which downplays the role of gender discrimination, and which falls short of challenging existing structures.

Conclusion

This article has analysed the translation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in SSR, and the ways in which external support to SSR can contribute to gendering the security sector in conflict-affected countries. Through a case study of a Norwegian-led Specialized Police Team which provided capacity building in crime scene management to Malian Security Forces as part of the UN mission in Mali, the analysis focused on how different understandings of gender inform gender mainstreaming practice.

The analysis identified translations of gender as knowledge, representation, sameness and difference in the material, and shows how these understandings informed active efforts to implement the WPS agenda and promote gender equality in the work of the Specialized Police Team, thus

demonstrating the potential for external support to SSR to also contribute to the implementation of the WPS agenda. Despite gender equality not being a topic in the specific project aims, the Norwegian officers showed an awareness of the role of Norway as a global promoter of gender equality and considered it their job to promote gender equality and women's participation. This shows how when police are deployed to peacekeeping missions to provide expertise in criminal justice, these may simultaneously promote liberal international norms and ideas, including gender equality. I therefore argue that to fully comprehend how norms travel, one must gain insight into the roles of deployed personnel and their counterparts, and how norm translation takes place as part of the micro-level interactions and everyday practices that these engage in.

The translations and understandings of gender identified here are associated with what feminist scholars identify as a 'traditional' approach to gender mainstreaming. While the Norwegian officers worked actively to promote gender equality and women's participation, the potential for capacity building to contribute to a more transformative approach to gendering the security sector is limited by the lack of more transformative understandings of gender. The analysis shows that women in the Malian Security Forces are affected by societal gender norms which affect women's choices, the roles they are given and expected to fill, and the expectations towards them in the workplace. Both indirectly, such as when women choose a technical unit over an operational one because that is more compatible with family life, and directly, when women are not deployed to crime scenes after a certain hour because their commanding officers expect them to have responsibilities to the home/family outside regular working hours.

The dominant understandings of gender in the material do not seem to produce gender mainstreaming practices that address how women's choices and roles in the workplace, and even their (partial) exclusions from the public sphere, are affected by societal gender norms that guide women's roles and behaviour in the private sphere. A more transformative approach would go beyond understandings of gender as knowledge, representation, sameness or difference, to also consider and seek to address how the structuring power of gender penetrates all aspects of social life and social interactions. This includes an understanding of how women's roles in the private sphere affects their roles in the public sphere, followed by practices that challenge existing frameworks, and calls for a transformation of existing structures and gender relations.

Contributing to a transformative gendering of the security sector is not an easy task, and it is a task that must be addressed at a systemic and structural level rather than by individual officers. The aim of the analysis presented here is therefore not to say what could have been done differently at an individual level, but rather to say something about why traditional approaches to

gender mainstreaming, and the implementation of the WPS agenda in SSR, often falls short of reaching its transformative potential as called for by feminist scholarship.

Finally, the findings show the value of applying a gender analysis to projects and partnerships in SSR, and the article demonstrates the salience of studying gender mainstreaming in projects that are not about gender *per se*. A lasting feminist critique is the side lining of gender in SSR, or gender as having little impact on other aspects of SSR processes. The research presented here shows that despite not being part of the stated aims of the project, promoting women's participation and gender perspectives can be an integrated part of capacity building in SSR. Further, this research shows that gender considerations are in fact omnipresent and part of everyday interactions, rather than a separate topic or an add-on that only concerns women.

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