

# ENCOUNTERING METIS IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL

Sam Cook

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The “origin” story of Resolution 1325 is probably amongst the most well-known narratives of successful feminist intervention in international politics.<sup>1</sup> Becoming equally familiar is the narrative that the Security Council’s Women, Peace and Security (WPS) policy discourse has not lived up to the resolution’s transformative promise.<sup>2</sup> The language of these critiques varies, but it is not uncommon to hear the accusation 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-opted.”<sup>3</sup> This paper does not set out to dispute these claims and I mostly agree with their overall assessment of the “state of play” of WPS policy.<sup>4</sup> However, I argue that interventions to secure particular feminist (or other) meanings in an institution such as the Security Council will “almost inevitably involve the most microscopic struggles around individual and institutional practices.”<sup>5</sup> That is, if we want to understand courses of action in or by the Security Council, for example the acceptance or refusal of certain language in its policy texts, we must account for the prevailing possibilities of language in that space.<sup>6</sup>

Laura Shepherd proposes we do this by paying analytical attention to “the discursive terrain of international institutions when analysing the formulation and implementation of security policy.”<sup>7</sup> Although I provide a reading of this discursive terrain, this is not an account of the policymaking practices of the Security Council writ large. Rather my interest here is in exploring how feminists encounter and work within the practices of that space, its rules and procedures, its dominant ways of operating. The discursive terrain I am looking for is thus 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. To trace the topography of this terrain, I explore a set of interviews with feminists who either are working or have worked to see feminist approaches and interests included within the Security Council as a WPS policymaking space. I read these not for a definitive account of Security Council practice, but as texts that provide an account of feminist intervention in, and through, the practices of that space.<sup>8</sup> It was there that I encountered *Metis*, Titan goddess of good counsel, advice, planning, cunning, and craftiness, bearer of the cunning intelligence needed to act in a world of change.<sup>9</sup>

## INTRODUCING METIS

As may become apparent in what follows, *metis* has a reputation for being hard to pin down and as impossible to define with any precision.<sup>10</sup> Philologists Detienne and Vernant – the primary interlocutors of *metis* in contemporary social theory – describe it in their 1976 text *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society (Les Ruses 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,

- 1 As the co-editors Paul Kirby and Laura Shepherd remark in the 2016 special issue of *International Affairs*, “[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.” Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, “The Futures Past of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda”, *International Affairs* 92 (2) (2016), 373-392, 373.
- 2 See for example the critiques discussed in, Dianne Otto, “The Exile of Inclusion: Reflections on Gender Issues in International Law over the Last Decade”, *Melbourne Journal of International Law* 10 (1) (2009): 11-26; Paul Kirby and Laura J. Shepherd, “Reintroducing Women, Peace and Security”, *International Affairs* 92 (2) (2016), 249-254; Laura J. Shepherd, “Power and Authority in the Production of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325”, *International Studies Quarterly* 52 (2) (2008): 383-404.
- 3 See the discussion in Sara de Jong and Susanne Kimm, “The Co-Optation of Feminisms: A Research Agenda”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 19 (2) (2017): 185-200; and Gülay Caglar, Elisabeth Prügl, and Susanne Zwingel, “Introducing Feminist Strategies in International Governance” in *Feminist Strategies in International Governance*, ed. Gülay Caglar, Elisabeth Prügl, and Susanne Zwingel (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 4-5. See also Amanda Gouws, “The Rise of the Femocrat?”, *Agenda* 30 (1996): 31-43.
- 4 There is, for example, little with which I can comfortably disagree in this broad 2009 assessment of the “current” problems on display in the Security Council’s WPS policy as including: “a pattern of selective engagement with feminist ideas as they are instrumentalised to serve institutional purposes; an across-the-board absence of strong accountability mechanisms, even as the outside pressure for accountability grows; and the tendency for protective stereotypes of women to normatively re-emerge following an initial flirtation with more active and autonomous representations.” Otto, “Exile of Inclusion”, 12.
- 5 Alan Hunt, “Rights and Social Movements: Counter-Hegemonic Strategies”, *Journal of Law and Society* 17 (3) (1990), 309-328, 323.
- 6 David R. Howarth and Yannis Stavrakakis, “Introducing Discourse Theory and Political Analysis”, in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, ed. David R. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 18.
- 7 As Shepherd explains elsewhere, 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).” Laura J. Shepherd, “Sex, Security and Superhero(in)s: From 1325 to 1820 and Beyond”, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 13 (4) (2011), 502-521, 514.

opportunism, various skills, and experience acquired over the years.”<sup>11</sup> J. E. Tiles, for his part, sees the requirements of *metis* as “the exercise of continual alertness, careful control, and unflinching concentration.”<sup>12</sup> Elsewhere, to have *metis* is described as having the “know how to make use of a favourable situation.”<sup>13</sup> In attempting to articulate *metis*, many point to activities, occupations or “ways of being” (not all of which are human) that exhibit *metis*. So, for example, “The fox and the octopus have *metis*. Hunters, fishermen, navigators, metalworkers, weavers, and potters exhibit *metis*.”<sup>14</sup> Included in lists 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.”<sup>15</sup> And, directly relevant to thinking of feminist interventions in the Security Council as an enactment of *metis*, James C. Scott sees “[w]ar, diplomacy and politics more generally [as] *metis*-laden skills.”<sup>16</sup> Detienne and Vernant acknowledge the distinct and varied contexts and levels at which *metis* operates and in this paper I have attempted to draw on the many forms in which the concept or figure appears.<sup>17</sup> In so doing I have let the slipperiness of *metis* remain – indeed this quality is part of its appeal.

There are a number of reasons, very much intertwined, that are posited for the elusiveness of *metis*. These are related both to the qualities or characteristics of *metis* and to, “the particular image Greek thought created of itself” — in which *metis* is conspicuous by its absence.”<sup>18</sup> Although this “aspect of mental cognition” has a stable role, as a mental category, through Greek antiquity, Detienne and Vernant note that “its presence as a master value in the Greek world remains largely implicit.”<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to define with any precision or exactness.<sup>20</sup> It appears, they argue “more or less under the surface, immersed in practical operations.... It is never made manifest for what it is, it is never clearly revealed in a theoretical work that aims to define it.”<sup>21</sup> As they explain,

the form of knowing represented by *metis* is “erased from the realm of true knowledge and relegated, according to the circumstances, to the level of mere routine, chancey inspiration, changeable opinion or even charlatanerie, pure and simple.”<sup>22</sup> Whether or not one agrees with a schema of thought that sees “practical reason as ‘radically’ opposed to philosophical reason”, the way in which *metis* is understood in relation to other ways of knowing remains relevant (as will emerge in the discussion below).<sup>23</sup>

But what of the other reason posited for this difficulty (perhaps impossibility) of defining *metis* with precision? That reason, as Harrison points out, is that *metis* is “found only in praxis, or better, it *hides* in praxis.”<sup>24</sup> This characteristic of *metis*, this “embeddedness” in historically specific circumstance, is why *metis* serves as a useful “thinking tool”: as a logic of action, it presents a form through which the practices of feminist policy interventions in the Security Council can be analysed. To draw the connection between these practices and *metis* I return in the next section to the place in which my own 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 users – commonly assumed to be passive and guided by established rules – operate.”<sup>25</sup> I begin by working through an analysis of feminist policy interventions as akin to these practices of use and then move on, in the remainder of this paper, to outline an analysis of these ways of operating as enactments of *metis*.

## PRACTICES OF USE

To engage within the system and attempt to shift the prevailing discourse in the Security Council feminists must rearticulate or “use” its forms.<sup>26</sup> By referencing the terms of the system, subordinate users are able to position themselves as intelligible in relation to what dominant actors already “know” – those forms that resonate with familiarity. Feminists operating within the Security Council space readily admit that they are required to work

within a set of fairly rigid constraints.<sup>27</sup> 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.<sup>28</sup>

It is in this paradoxical position, of having to use the strictures of its forms in order to undo it, that those subordinated by the system work to create a space of politics. In de Certeau's account, such ways of operating constitute "resistance to the historical law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations."<sup>29</sup> The creative and political project is to find ways to introduce elements believed to transcend the boundaries of the space.<sup>30</sup> 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 they must work and, as the source of inventiveness:

It's sort of like being creative...it's 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.<sup>31</sup>

In the analysis below, I explore these uses of the Security Council's limits by those who, to use de Certeau's terms, "are not its makers." The creative potential of these articulations is not unlimited. I have explored elsewhere, for example, how the contested figure of the Woman-in-Conflict is produced in particular moments of representation by the everyday practices and relationships of power within the Security Council space.<sup>32</sup> De Certeau argues, however, that this subordinate position in the systems of power is what underlies the creative logic of these ways of operating – a logic understood, he suggests, as the logic of *metis*.<sup>33</sup> Like Foucault, de Certeau is concerned with the "microphysics of power" and, similarly, aims to "perceive and analyse the microbe-like operations proliferating within technocratic structures and deflecting their functioning."<sup>34</sup> However, he argues, only by analysing the ways of operating of those who are subordinate in the system (as feminists are

- 8 The subjects in these interviews have been anonymised so as to focus attention on the content of interviews as a text from which discursive practices can be read. Interview subjects are current or past participants in the "Women, Peace and Security" policy community of the Security Council as representatives of NGOs, Member States and the UN.
- 9 Metis does not appear as a major figure in Greek religion – there is no cult or ritual deifying her name. Metis, in the ancient Greek religious order, was a Titan elder and of an earlier age than Zeus – who she came to marry as his first spouse. Zeus, in attempting to avoid fate and the prediction that he will be defeated by his offspring, swallows Metis. 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. 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. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society* trans. Janet Lloyd (Sussex: Harvester Press, 1978), 57.
- 10 Neumann attempted to familiarise the field of International Relations with the qualities of *metis* in his 2002 article - see Iver B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31 (3) (2002), 627-651, 633. See also Corneliu Bjola and Markus Kornprobst, *Understanding International Diplomacy: Theory, Practice and Ethics* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 126. The authors there note that a decade later the concept remains widely neglected. This may be connected to the relative neglect in the discipline of practice-based approaches.
- 11 Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3.; Robert Pogue Harrison, "The Ambiguities of Philology", review of *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*, Jean-Pierre Vernant, Marcel Detienne", *Diacritics* 16 (2) (1986), 14-20, 16.
- 12 J. E. Tiles, "The Cunning of Tradition", review of *Knowing Words: Wisdom and Cunning in the Classical Tradition of China and Greece*, Lisa Raphals, *Philosophy East and West* 44 (2) (1994), 387-395, 387.
- 13 Bjola and Kornprobst, *Understanding International Diplomacy*, 126.
- 14 Tiles, "The Cunning of Tradition", 387.
- 15 James C. Scott, "State Simplifications: Nature, Space and People", *Nomos* 38 (1996), 75.
- 16 Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn", 633.



Goddess (presumed to be Metis) under Zeus' throne

- 17 Detienne and Vernant acknowledge that the varied contexts and levels at which *metis* operates are 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 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. Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 2.
- 18 Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3. See too Marcel Detienne, "On Efficacy in Practical Reason: Comparative Approaches", *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 20 (1) (2012): 43-60.
- 19 Harrison, "The Ambiguities of Philology", 16. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1984), 81.
- 20 Harrison, "The Ambiguities of Philology", 16.
- 21 Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3.
- 22 Ibid., 4.
- 23 For further resources and a sense of this debate in relation to the place of *metis*, see Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3
- 24 Harrison, "The Ambiguities of Philology", 16.
- 25 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 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 utilisation.
- 26 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. ....By adopting the point of view of enunciation .... 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." de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xi.
- 27 These observations emerge from my own work as a policy advocate in this space from 2005-2010 for the UN office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and from my reading of the interview transcripts referenced earlier.
- 28 CM, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.
- 29 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 18.

in relation to Security Council policymaking) is it possible to "gauge the difference or similarity between the production of the image and the secondary production hidden in the process of its utilisation."<sup>35</sup> 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.'"<sup>36</sup>

## Beginning with Security Council Policymaking

There is no one predictable policymaking route that can be easily traced in this space. CM, who gained advocacy experience in other multilateral institutions, 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.<sup>37</sup>

But this is the trick of *metis*. As a distinctive *technê* it "is concerned always with the production and effectiveness of knowledge within 'a particular sphere of activity.'"<sup>38</sup> The underlying organisation or "structures" of Security Council policymaking were the starting point in the account 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.<sup>39</sup> 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.<sup>40</sup> For those outside of the Council's Permanent Membership, the Council's working method "is set....a *fait accompli*."<sup>41</sup> But, as 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."<sup>42</sup> In what follows, I begin to explore how feminists, although outside its formal processes, work with (and within) the Council's practices of policymaking – these are their forms of use.

The general ordering of the Council's work and the elements it entails clearly underlies the logic of the NGO Working Group (hereafter NGO WG) on Women, Peace and Security's primary ongoing project: the Monthly Action Points (MAP). Each month the group issues this, a "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."<sup>43</sup> This regular practice is part of a general attempt "to get the Council to incorporate and live up to this obligation on women, peace and security in its daily work."<sup>44</sup> This reflects an understanding of all potential Security Council actions as offering a space for intervention. As HM reflects,

that's how we started on 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.<sup>45</sup>

Understanding how the Council's "daily work" – its agenda – is organised is the sort of knowledge of context that *metis* both requires and exhibits. So, for example, 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."<sup>46</sup> This categorisation is, JS agrees, consequential to how the process of policymaking will proceed and, who will lead the drafting of any proposed texts. This is, in turn, determined by how the Council's work is divided and responsibility

for drafting allocated amongst the Member States at the start of each calendar year.<sup>47</sup> This categorisation also brings into play cycles of reporting and renewals that then, in turn, determine what must be addressed in any particular month's programme of work.<sup>48</sup>

The NGO WG's MAP, by setting out the specific asks of the group each month and in a public form, *de facto* creates a tool for monitoring the Council that implicitly recognises its working methods.<sup>49</sup> 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 NGO WG's recommendations or desired outcomes:

[it] simultaneously points out where the [holder of the month's Council presidency] is placing (hopefully) an emphasis on women, peace and security in its own priorities during its tenure for the month in the Security Council.... and then looks at what is expected on the Council's agenda. So, looking to pull the Women, Peace and Security concerns into [the] country situations [that make up] the daily work of the council, the sort of bread and butter of the Council's work. So, where is there a mandate expected, where is there a country report expected, where is the Council expected to hold an open or closed discussion on a country situation? So, is Afghanistan expected to have a mandate renewal and a country report? Is the council expected to discuss these things?

This articulation within the MAP is more than a mere restatement of structure or a presentation of data in relation to a particular place or issue. As CM argues: "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 on the DRC."<sup>50</sup> The MAP takes the approach CM suggests and 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.<sup>51</sup>

JS's explanation of the MAP 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.<sup>52</sup>

Understanding the scheme underlying the organisation of work in the Council provides a basic outline of how policymaking is organised and from there a view as to how it might proceed. The process leading to a resolution in relation to country-specific resolutions, for example is, in JS's view, "pretty straightforward":

You're going to have a mandate renewal and you're going to have a timetable .....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.<sup>53</sup>

- 30 Hunt, "Rights and social movements", 314; Kevin Adamson, "The Construction of Romanian Social Democracy (1989-1996)", in *Discourse Theory and Political Analysis: Identities, Hegemonies and Social Change*, ed. David R. Howarth, Aletta J. Norval and Yannis Stavrakakis (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1985), 113.
- 31 Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3; CM, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.
- 32 Sam Cook, "The 'Woman-in-Conflict' at the UN Security Council: A Subject of Practice", *International Affairs* 92 (2) (2016), 353-372.
- 33 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Ibid., xiii. As he explains, "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.
- 36 Ibid., xvii.
- 37 CM, Personal Interview.
- 38 Although this term *techné* is open to interpretation, Kopelson, defines *techné* as "a productive art, capable of becoming a 'set of transferable strategies' but incapable of being reduced to 'a set of deductive postulates.'" Karen Kopelson, "Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning; or, the Performance of Neutrality (Re) Considered as a Composition Pedagogy for Student Resistance", *College Composition and Communication* 55 (1) (2003), 115-146, 130. Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 11.
- 39 Niels Nagelhus Schia, "Being Part of the Parade—"Going Native" in the United Nations Security Council", *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 36 (1) (2013), 138-156, 140.
- 40 Ibid., 140.
- 41 Cited in Schia, "Being Part of the Parade", 144. See also Claudia Aradau and Jef Huysmans, "Critical Methods in International Relations: The Politics of Techniques, Devices and Acts", *European Journal of International Relations* 20 (3) (2013), 596-619.
- 42 NT and GP, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.
- 43 NGO WG, "Security Council Monthly Action Points (MAP) for the Security Council", accessed 7 February 2018, <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/advocacy/map/>
- 44 JS, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.
- 45 HM, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.

From this perspective, policymaking might seem straightforward, and the entry points for advocacy defined or at least determinable. However, day-to-day policymaking, particularly for those outside the formal process, retains a high degree of unpredictability.<sup>54</sup> Although the MAP offer possibilities for future action it does not capture how any particular action comes to be taken within such a context. It is in just such environments that *metis* comes to bear. As Scott explains, situations in which *metis* operates are distinctive in 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.<sup>55</sup>

## Working with Uncertainty

What particularly surprised HM when she began working in the Security Council policymaking space was “to find how random policy making is ... especially on thematic areas.”<sup>56</sup> As she went on to explain: “it is varied and complex and often accidental.”<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> This is reflected too in LM’s suggestion that the ways in which 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.”<sup>59</sup>

This unpredictability is, in part, a testament to the unpredictability of global politics and events to which the Council is expected to respond, and the willingness of its veto-holding members to do so. Furthermore, and as Niels Nagelhus Schia points out, 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.”<sup>60</sup> For example, 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.<sup>61</sup>

In relation to the WPS space, the importance of individual state actors to the policymaking process adds to its unpredictability and, simultaneously, reinforces existing power relationships.<sup>62</sup> As LM explains:

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.<sup>63</sup>

Further complicating matters, and contributing to the sense that policymaking practice is ambiguous and uncertain, is the fact that, in the Security Council, “much of the negotiation process takes place in private and informal settings closed to all but those directly involved.”<sup>64</sup> 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.”<sup>65</sup> And, as a delegate in Schia’s study points out, “[s]imply calling delegates from

46 CM, Personal Interview.

47 As JS explains: “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 ... 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.” JS, Personal Interview.

48 JS explains: “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.” JS, Personal Interview.

49 JS, Personal Interview.

50 CM, Personal Interview.

51 CM, Personal Interview.

52 JS, Personal Interview.

53 JS, Personal Interview.

54 JS in outlining the process qualified her comments by saying: “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.” JS, Personal Interview.

55 Scott, “State Simplifications”, 75-6.

56 HM, Personal Interview.

57 HM, Personal Interview.

58 HM, Personal Interview.

59 LM, Personal Interview, New York, May 2014.

60 Schia, “Being Part of the Parade”, 141.

61 Courtney B. Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations: The Global Dance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 192.

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."<sup>66</sup> This informality may account for the general neglect of political processes within the literature on the UN, or at least among those that wish to generalise its forms. As Courtney B. Smith notes:

[n]early every account of UN decision making authored by former practitioners and members of the press is replete with situations in which "behind-the-scenes" negotiations provided a catalyst for the formal decisions that were made.<sup>67</sup>

The "private negotiations and informal consultations" that lie behind these catalytic moments are strenuously criticised for entrenching the power of the Council's permanent members and they certainly present a challenge to feminist practices of inclusion and transparency.<sup>68</sup> However, it is this informality, and thus ambiguity, of process that feminists and others 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."<sup>69</sup>

Although fraught with ethical challenges (produced by the counter-pull towards transparency to a broader feminist community), it is in these places that feminists find political potential. This then, is the moment – the space – of *metis*. As Corneliu Bjola and Markus 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 the world."<sup>70</sup> 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."<sup>71</sup> For delegations proposing a resolution, there are few formal limits on their freedom to submit draft resolutions. Smith observes that a delegation's first step in pursuing a proposal is (following an exchange with foreign ministry personnel at home) to "quietly circulate it among their close friends and allies" so as to assess and address initial reactions and ensure any text introduced has the endorsement of a core group.<sup>72</sup> To improve the likelihood of the text's acceptance, the delegation may, Smith suggests, "find it helpful to quietly consult members of the Secretariat for their knowledge of the language used in previous texts on the same issue."<sup>73</sup> Following this the improved text is "circulated to a larger group of interested parties" and consultation is thus underway before any public debate has begun.<sup>74</sup> Whether or not they will have access to a particular process or its attendant texts is, for feminist advocates, fraught with uncertainty. It is possible only by relying on these behind-the-scenes moments and on relationships (even if not direct) with those who do have access.<sup>75</sup> As JS explains:

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.<sup>76</sup>

In the Security Council context, having sight of the policy text is only the initial point for intervention. Advocates need to "make use of" the opening for it to be meaningful. So, for example, CM explains:

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

62 As LM suggests, while on WPS there's some sense of a progression through issues, "it's moving from this to the other to the next, you know", those with relative power in the system are able to shift how the process is understood and proceeds. 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." LM, Personal Interview. With the addition of France, these two Member States also control the majority of resolution drafting in relation to the Country situations under consideration. As JS explains: "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 country situation, except for Afghanistan, it's one of the P3 members who holds the pen. Afghanistan it's an elected member." JS, Personal Interview.

63 CM, Personal Interview.

64 Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 192.

65 Ibid., 233.

66 Schia, "Being Part of the Parade", 142.

67 Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 238.

68 See the discussion in Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 238. That delegates from these states are better able to "learn, master, and define the game and skills needed in the informal processes" further entrenches the power of these states - Schia, "Being Part of the Parade", 143.

69 Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 234.

70 Bjola and Kornprobst, *Understanding International Diplomacy*, 126.

71 *Metis* then "represents the kind of practical skills acquired in responding to a constantly changing natural and human environment." Scott, "State Simplifications", 75.

72 Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 192.

73 Ibid.

74 Ibid.

75 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.

76 JS, Personal Interview; Smith, *Politics and Process at the United Nations*, 192.

to ... it's not that they don't like to think ... I'll be fair ... a lot 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."<sup>77</sup>

From the discussion thus far, *metis* looks to be 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 these practices of use 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."<sup>78</sup>

## LOGICS OF USE: FROM PRACTICE TO TACTIC

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 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.<sup>79</sup>

As he explains, 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.<sup>80</sup> Knowledge of these limits – learned through interacting with them as feminist advocates do – is itself part of *metis*.<sup>81</sup> Recognising a particular social constellation as ripe for intervention requires, in the present case, knowing and applying the codes of policymaking practice. It is through these "improvisations" that actors attempt to reconstitute the discursive field.<sup>82</sup> It is here that *metis* might be found. As de Certeau reminds us, 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.<sup>83</sup> But, as suggested earlier, this subordinate position 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."<sup>84</sup> 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.<sup>85</sup> The former, available to subjects of "will and power", represents a type of knowledge that is, "sustained and determined by the power to provide oneself with one's own place."<sup>86</sup>

In the Security Council this place of strategy is, at a formal level, only available to Council members and, perhaps more accurately, only to the P5.<sup>87</sup> However, the ability to command institutional resources allows even those without a formal place to engage substantively across a wide terrain. HM posits, for example, that one of the reasons the Council is "obsessed with sexual violence and not women's leadership" is that the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict "has a staff of ten or fifteen whose only job is to lobby member states. That is all they do ... go around and lobby member states, and pester them ... on every single resolution ... every month."<sup>88</sup> 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

77 CM, Personal Interview.

78 As he puts it: "[a]nalysis shows that a relation (always social) determines it's [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." de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 218.

79 *Ibid.*, xviii, 21.

80 *Ibid.*, xvii.

81 Bjola and Kornprobst, *Understanding International Diplomacy*, 125.

82 Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), 82.

83 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xvii

84 *Ibid.*, xv.

85 *Ibid.*, xvii, xiv.

86 *Ibid.*, xix, 35-6. 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."

87 Schia, "Being Part of the Parade".

88 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." HM, Personal Interview.

large, to do that kind of concerted advocacy in the Council with those members” except around a “really major renewal” or “for a new mission.”<sup>89</sup> This position – of being without the “power” to shift the game – is the tactical position, the place of action in the “space of the other.”<sup>90</sup> As much as a strategy is organised “by the postulation of power”, a tactic is determined by the absence of a proper locus.<sup>91</sup> 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 capitalise on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure independence with respect to circumstances.<sup>92</sup>

Whereas strategies might impose totalising discourses, a tactic “must play on, and with, the terrain imposed on it and organised by the law of a foreign power”, in “isolated actions, blow by blow.”<sup>93</sup> For de Certeau, these tactical ways of operating, like that of the storyteller, are akin to *metis*. In Detienne and Vernant’s telling, there are three elements that differentiate *metis* “more clearly from other sorts of behaviour” and as “characteristic of the stories that tell about it.”<sup>94</sup> These elements are, he argues, “constituted by three relations of *metis*, to the ‘situation,’ to disguise, and to a paradoxical invisibility.”<sup>95</sup> In what remains of this paper I set out the beginnings of an analysis of feminist interventions in terms of the first two of these elements. The third – the relation of *metis* to paradoxical invisibility – is not explored here but might be thought of as indicating that the creative possibilities of *metis* are to be found in its obliqueness.<sup>96</sup>

## DISGUISE: IN THE PLACE OF ANOTHER

Having no proper place in the system, feminist WPS advocates rely on the existing practices of policymaking. 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.”<sup>97</sup> It does not, Kopelson suggests, “concern itself



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.

with ‘true being’ or ‘unchanging essences.’” In fact, she goes on to say, “one possessed of *metis* “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.”<sup>98</sup> In relation to feminist WPS advocates, CM suggests that “being relatable” is critical to successful advocacy. An effective advocate is not only briefable and good at relationship building, but “likeable and physically relatable. Somebody who can go into a room and look like the enemy.”<sup>99</sup> This relatability opens political space:

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.”<sup>100</sup>

But relatability goes beyond appearance: “[p]eople will tell you”, says CM, “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.”<sup>101</sup> 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.<sup>102</sup>

89 JS, Personal Interview.

90 Whereas strategy might be thought of as the “logic of power”, tactics are the “logic of circumvention.” de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 37. See also Hugo Letiche and Matt Statler, “Evoking Metis: Questioning the Logics of Change, Responsiveness, Meaning and Action in Organizations”, *Culture and Organization* 11 (1) (2005), 1-16, 10.

91 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xi.

92 Ibid., xix.

93 Ibid., 37.

94 Ibid., 81.

95 Ibid.

96 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.” Ibid., 18.

97 Kopelson, “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning”, 132; Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 3, 21, 44.

98 Kopelson, “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning”, 132.

99 CM, Personal Interview.

100 CM, Personal Interview.

101 CM, Personal Interview.

102 BN, Personal Interview, New York, April 2014.



Within an environment where individuals primarily function as representatives of an abstract legal subject, the interests of those individuals and their place in other hierarchies also have to be taken into account.

Amongst UN member states, for example, says HM “there is a huge amount of attention to the optics of collaboration” 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 ... who took a key 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.<sup>103</sup>

This desire to be seen in a particular relationship to issues or other actors in the space is something that several of my interlocutors marked out as a primary pivot 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’”.

[Sam Cook: 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.”<sup>104</sup>

This desire 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 criticised, well here’s some information that would be useful etc”.<sup>105</sup>

Within an environment where individuals primarily function as representatives of an abstract legal subject, the interests of those individuals and their place in other hierarchies also have to be taken into account.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, contributions of specific text are only accepted if they are recognised within the system. “I mean with the Security Council”, says 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.

[Sam Cook: it’s like you have some building blocks and it’s up to you to build the castle?]<sup>107</sup>

CM agreed with this characterisation and that much of successful advocacy depends on finding, and responding to, the desires or position of those with power in terms that resonate. This adaptability and relatability is an important aspect of the logic of *metis*. But, as CM commented in affirming this point: “and then there’s the lucky breaks.”<sup>108</sup>

103 HM, Personal Interview.

104 CM, Personal Interview.

105 HM, Personal Interview.

106 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. Schia, “Being Part of the Parade”.

107 CM, Personal Interview.

108 CM, Personal Interview.

## 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.<sup>109</sup> 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*.<sup>110</sup> Many of the successful efforts Jo Becker documents in *Campaigning for Justice: Human Rights Advocacy in Practice* “might not have been possible under other circumstances.”<sup>111</sup> It is, however, impossible to define in advance what “the occasion” or “moment of opportunity” will be that sees the effort succeed.<sup>112</sup> It is, de Certeau 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.”<sup>113</sup> If we explore CM’s narrative of Resolution 1889 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:

[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.<sup>114</sup>

At first glance there may be little in this account that explains why this is a moment of opportunity. 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 intervention as part of a wider context. CM begins her account not with Vietnam’s national interests or desires in terms of

policy outcomes, but 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 be 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, which 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 a WPS 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; her attendance was part of the high-level representation common at the UN during the General Assembly’s annual opening session; Clinton had long been a high-profile supporter of women’s rights issues; and/or perhaps the US wanted to signal the seriousness with which they take the issue of sexual violence in conflict. In any event, when 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.<sup>115</sup>

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.”<sup>116</sup> This example illustrates Kopelson’s argument that *metis* 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.”<sup>117</sup> As Becker notes, however, advocates “can take steps to make sure that they are prepared to maximise their potential when they do.”<sup>118</sup>

In another example, LM explains, feminist activists pushing for a more balanced WPS agenda were able to leverage the desire of the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for a resolution on sexual violence, into support for a future resolution on mediation and peacebuilding – Resolution 2122 – only a few months after the adoption of Resolution 2106. Says LM: “we never would have got 2122 without 2106 I think simply because there was no strategy in place to get it.”<sup>119</sup> 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

109 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 82.

110 *Ibid.*, 83

111 Jo Becker, *Campaigning for Justice: Human Rights Advocacy in Practice* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2012): 249-50.

112 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 83.

113 *Ibid.*, 83-84.

114 CM, Personal Interview.

115 CM, Personal Interview.

116 CM, Personal Interview.

117 Kopelson, “Rhetoric on the Edge of Cunning”, 132; Detienne and Vernant, *Cunning Intelligence*, 16-27.

118 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, *Campaigning for Justice*, 251.

119 LM, Personal Interview.



Feminists rely on their ability to articulate their positions within the dominant practices of the Security Council space. What makes this possible is that this space is characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability. Rather than being paralysed by their subordinate position within this context, feminist interventions rely on ambiguous spaces – whether within concepts, tropes such as the Woman-in-Conflict, or the informality of process – to create a space of politics.

that in place in time meant that ultimately, the introduction of “2106 forced the other aspects of the agenda to step up.”<sup>120</sup> This turning to advantage is not accidental or behaviour on a whim but part of careful and constant attentiveness to the environment. This, too, is *metis*.

### Feminist Possibilities

As I have demonstrated in the preceding discussion, feminists rely on their ability to articulate their positions within the dominant practices of the Security Council space. What makes this possible is that this space is characterised by uncertainty and unpredictability. Rather than being

paralysed by their subordinate position within this context, feminist interventions rely on 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 are tactically exploited in order to intervene and it thus makes sense that *metis* is sometimes understood as a “knowledge of ambiguity”.<sup>121</sup> The feminist interventions discussed here suggest a deep and enacted knowledge of the practices and relations of power in the Security Council and as characteristic of the behaviours of *metis* in their relation to the “‘situation,’ to disguise, and to a paradoxical invisibility.”<sup>122</sup> 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.”<sup>123</sup> Although not offering an escape from the dominant practices of Security Council policymaking, this position is one from which the creative potential of *metis* can be realised and elements introduced that might transcend the boundaries of the system. This turning to advantage is not accidental or behaviour on a whim but, I have argued, part of a careful and constant attentiveness to the environment that is an embodied articulation of *metis*.

120 LM, Personal Interview.

121 Letiche, “Evoking Metis”, 9.

122 de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 81.

123 John Harriss, *Depoliticizing Development: The World Bank and Social Capital* (London: Anthem Press, 2002). Ryerson Christie, “Critical voices and human security: To endure, to engage or to critique?”, *Security Dialogue* 41 (2) (2010): 169-190.

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Centre for Women, Peace and Security, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street, London WC2A 2AE

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