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Gender mainstreaming on the ground?
The case of EU development aid towards Rwanda

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Abstract: This article investigates why gender mainstreaming has not occurred in European Union (EU) development aid towards Rwanda despite a two-sided receptiveness from Rwanda and the EU's Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation. I use a feminist institutionalist approach to examine formal and informal institutions as well as the actors, networks and processes involved in policy formation and implementation. I argue that the largest stumbling block to effective implementation is an institutional weakness at the EU level which involves a decoupling of formal and informal institutions and leads to the 'ceremonial' behaviour of gender policy actors and a limited, instrumental policy guided by gendered assumptions. These reproduce further stereotypes and contribute to an asymmetrical power play within the institutions. This can disadvantage women and staff working on gender equality. Finally, the EU's institutional practices structurally marginalize the voices of Rwandan women and their movement which is problematic in the context of an increasingly authoritarian state.

Keywords: European Commission; civil society; development policy; gender policy; implementation; neo-institutionalism; international relations; foreign policy; political science.

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1. Gender mainstreaming in European Union development policy

Gender mainstreaming has its roots in the international debates on gender and development which were prevalent in the 1980s. Among the first policies to be gender mainstreamed, development policy is arguably the realm in which the greatest inroads have been made. In the European Union (EU), the first attempts to integrate gender in development policy were inspired by the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women (1975-1985) and the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985. In line with these international events, the European Commission established a 'Women in Development' (WID) policy, including its first WID desks, communiqués and references to women in the Third and Fourth Lomé conventions in 1984 and 1989 (Lister and Carbone 2006; Pollack and Hafner-Burton 2000). This approach addressed the exclusion of women from the development process by creating specific projects for women such as training, education or health services. Increasingly, the WID perspective was criticized by feminist scholars who noted that focussing on women (and their lack of access to resources) in isolation was ineffective as it ignored the essentially relational nature of women's subordination as well as the issue of power in women's access to resources (Moser 1993; Razavi and Miller 1995). Although these feminist critiques go as far back as the late 1970s, it was the UN Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995 that played a pivotal role in renewing international thinking about women and development. Following the Beijing Conference, the international community replaced the WID paradigm with the Gender and Development (GAD) paradigm and embraced the strategy of gender mainstreaming that implements it. GAD was considered innovative; it focuses on gender without dislodging women as the central subject since it recognises that improving women's status requires analysis of the relations between women and men. Gender mainstreaming would bring women's specific projects from the margins to the centre of development policy and would integrate a gender equality perspective across all aspects of policy. Furthermore,

the focus on gender allowed policy initiatives to consider male roles and responsibilities and stressed the shared responsibility of both women and men in removing imbalances in society (Council of Europe 1998).

Gender mainstreaming has witnessed a boom in the EU since the Beijing conference. The EU played a major role in the negotiations around the concept at the UN level and the Commission intensely lobbied for the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action (Kantola 2010). Later, the Commission used this momentum to push for gender mainstreaming in all EU policies (Kantola 2010) and in 1997, this commitment was written into the EU Treaty.[1] The treaty states, 'in all the activities [...] the Community shall aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women' (Treaty of Amsterdam 1997: Art. 2). In addition, the EU has adopted numerous high-level policy documents confirming that gender must be mainstreamed in all areas of development and into all programmes and projects at regional and country levels. Gender mainstreaming was also explicitly taken up in EU-African development policy when, in 2000, the Lomé Convention was replaced by a new Partnership Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states and the EU, signed in Cotonou. In Article 1, gender equality and mainstreaming are put forward as areas of priority, stating that 'systematic account shall be taken of the situation of women and gender issues in all areas – political, economic and social' (ACP-EC 2000).

A year later, in 2001, the Commission issued its 'Programme of Action for the Mainstreaming of Gender Equality in Community Development Cooperation' which stipulates a twin-track strategy to achieve gender equality. This twin-track strategy stipulates that 'the EC is committed to including gender equality goals in the mainstream of EC development co-operation policies, programmes and projects', while 'concrete actions targeting women (specific actions)' reinforce these processes (European Commission 2001: 8-13). In subsequent years, the European institutions have taken a number of steps to better integrate a gendered perspective into the EU's development agenda. In 2007, for example, the Commission issued a 'Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development Cooperation' aimed at increasing the efficiency of gender mainstreaming and refocusing specific actions for women's empowerment. To this end, it provided 41 concrete suggestions in the areas of governance, employment, education, health and domestic violence. More recently, the 2010 'EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development', also known as the 'Gender Action Plan', moved beyond the twin-track strategy to a 'three-pronged approach' consisting of gender mainstreaming, specific actions and policy dialogue to put gender equality more systematically on the agenda of the political dialogue with partner countries (European Commission 2010: 7).

Guided by these significant political commitments to gender equality, the external services of the EU should institutionalize mainstreaming methodologies and gender equality principles across their policy and operational work. The European External Action Service (previously the Commission's External Relations Directorate General, DG RELEX) and the

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[1] Consolidated version of the Treaty establishing the European Community, OJ C 340/173-306, 10.11.1997.

Commission's Directorate-General Development and Cooperation-EuropeAid (DEVCO; previously DG Development and DG AIDCO) are mainly responsible for outlining the EU's development policy and its implementation guidelines. In addition, approximately 140 EU Delegations and offices around the world are responsible for the implementation of external assistance, serving as the main entry points for integrating gender equality norms in the practice of European development aid. However, policy competency and receptiveness to gender mainstreaming diverge considerably among the various external DGs. No EU trade body, including the European Commission's DG Trade, has paid much attention to gender inequalities (Debusscher and True 2009). In contrast, DEVCO has been viewed as a gender-friendly DG and has issued a string of relevant policy statements, resolutions and communications on gender and development since the Beijing conference (Debusscher and True 2009). This is perhaps not surprising, as scholars have generally considered development policy to be 'a policy field that has been particular "amenable" to gender mainstreaming' (Kantola 2010: 130). Furthermore, since 2004, DEVCO (then AIDCO) has initiated a process of systematic technical assistance and capacity building on gender mainstreaming in development cooperation. In the past decade, DEVCO has trained over 2000 people – quite an impressive number considering the staff of the EU external services numbers approximately 7500.[2] We can thus expect that considerable institutional knowledge and experience has been accumulated over the years. Nevertheless, the literature on gender equality in EU development policy shows that despite some progress, major discrepancies between policy and practice remain (Allwood 2013; Debusscher 2011; Debusscher and van der Vleuten 2012; Lister and Carbone 2006; Painter and Ulmer 2002). The aim of this article is to examine *why* this is the case. I draw on feminist institutionalism to analyse EU aid towards Rwanda from 2008 to 2013. Before honing in on the Rwandan context and discussing why Rwanda provides a particularly interesting case for this analysis, I briefly sketch the global development context and the trend towards more aid effectiveness and ownership and how this relates to the evaluation of gender mainstreaming.

2. Aid effectiveness, gender and development

During the past decade, changes in development aid policies and instruments have been propagated, with the goal of improving the effectiveness of development (Holvoet and Inberg 2014). Ownership, harmonisation, alignment and management for results have been principles central to this reform agenda. These principles, laid down in the 2005 Paris Declaration, grew mainly out of a consensus on the importance of 'country ownership' to the success of development efforts, as 'it came to be recognised that the effectiveness of aid depends critically on whether or not a country's leadership is really committed to development' (Booth 2011: iv). In other words, decades of development aid showed that donors cannot fix partner country's problems by themselves as 'successes aren't maintained without local buy-in' – from political elites as well as grassroots people (Oxfam 2009: 2). In this context, it has

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[2] There are approximately 3900 staff members at DG Development and Cooperation and 3600 at the European External Action Service, of which 2060 are in country delegations.

become clear that 'progress is only made if both donors and partner countries are committed and determined to move in the same direction' (van Reisen 2005: 33). When approached from a gender perspective, the concepts of ownership and accountability take on new complexities and 'the question as to who owns' comes to the fore (van Reisen 2005: 31). An important precondition is the participation of women in government, parliament and administration as decision-makers and administrators. Gendering development policy requires 'that women in partner countries are empowered to be part of all stages of decision-making', not only at national level, but also at regional and local levels (van Reisen 2005: 39). In addition to the participation of female decision-makers and administrators, it is equally important that women and their organizations have a voice in shaping the objectives, priorities and strategies of programmes that affect them – i.e., they are consulted and brought into structures of decision-making (Jahan 1995; van Reisen 2005). Indeed, research has shown that policies developed with the participation of women's organisations or in accordance with their agendas, generate higher quality policy, insofar as they help frame it in more transformative ways (van der Vleuten, van Eerdewijk and Roggeband 2014). This is because the participation of external gender advocates 'increases the possibility that policy-makers become more aware of their own biases' (Krizsan and Lombardo 2013: 85), as well as their institution's culture and predetermined goals. A strong women's movement in a partner country thus serves as a watchdog to detect blind spots in the gender and development policy and verify that gender is mainstreamed in a transformative and agenda-setting manner while addressing women's substantive objectives (Jahan 1995).

2.1.   Rwanda from a gender perspective

The 1994 Rwandan genocide is etched in our memories as one of the defining tragedies of the twentieth century. In the span of merely three months, at least half a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus were murdered in a calculated slaughter organized by a ruling group of 'Hutu Power' extremists (Pottier 2002: 9). The genocide ended when the Rwandan Patriotic Front defeated the ruling government army and placed a new government in power. Observers have praised the Rwandan government for the speed with which the state was rebuilt allowing for the resumption of basic services such as education, infrastructure and health. Today, Rwanda can claim efficient technocratic governance, economic growth, low corruption levels and an ambitious economic modernisation agenda (UNDP 2007; World Bank 2010).

While other trends are less encouraging (including widening social inequality and the restriction of political liberties), one positive area of note is that the government of Rwanda has created an environment favourable to the promotion of gender equality. From early on, it publicly expressed a strong commitment to expanding women's rights, and has taken numerous steps to increase women's political participation (Longman 2006). Since the new government was installed, after the 2003 elections, about two thirds of the cabinet has been female, demonstrating a genuine political will to place women in high-level political positions. Furthermore, the 2003 Rwandan Constitution, around which the women's movement efficiently mobilized, guarantees that 'women are granted at least thirty per cent of

posts in decision-making organs' (Government of Rwanda 2003: Article 9). In 2008, Rwanda was the first country in the world with a female majority in a national legislative chamber. It is also important to note that, the women's movement has played a very active role in the post-war period. Immediately after the genocide, when many of the most basic needs, such as food, clothing and shelter were not being met, women's organisations stepped in to fill the 'social void' (Bauer and Britton 2006: 16). They provided much needed basic services, as well as support and counselling to the traumatised survivors. Although the Rwandan women's movement predates the genocide, the movement grew significantly in the decade following the genocide and has come to be 'among the most active sector[s] of civil society'; this role was demonstrated by the movement's advocacy work on the 1999 'Inheritance Law' which established gender equality in land inheritance and ownership within most marriages (Burnet 2008: 372; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013).

Gender equality plays a central role in the Rwandan government's commitment and pursuit of its ambitious modernization policy. For example, a Gender Monitoring Office was established in 2009 and tasked with collecting and and monitoring data for target-driven and evidence-based policy-making. Remarkable in this respect, is that the Gender Monitoring Office not only conducts 'gender auditing' in the public sector but also in the private sector and in NGOs and religious organisations. It seems that the newly adopted roles of women in the post-conflict setting, combined with a government committed to gender equality, have translated into improved representation of women in governance and the establishment of several national mechanisms to promote gender equality. Nonetheless, the meaning of these initiatives in an authoritarian state like Rwanda is unclear (Burnet 2008; Longman 2006). One can certainly question the 'significance of women's high levels of representation in parliament and other governmental institutions given the increasingly authoritarian nature of the Rwandan state since 1994' (Longman 2006: 146; see also Debusscher and Ansoms 2013). All in all, however, the inclusion of important gender equality protections in the Rwandan Constitution, the government's rigorous data collection on gender inequality and 'gender auditing', as well as the participation of women in parliament and decision-making, indicate a sustained high-level *formal* commitment to the goals of gender equality on the part of the Rwandan government.

With both the EU and Rwanda receptive to the idea of gendering development, one might expect gender mainstreaming to take shape on particularly fertile ground. In fact, even though there is a receptive partner country and a clear commitment from the EU, gender mainstreaming *still* did not occur. If the conditions for success are (generally) met and gender is therefore not filtered out because of a lack of will among political elites, why is gender still lost? What is it about the institutional processes that renders gender invisible? To answer these questions, I draw on a feminist institutionalist approach to highlight how gender is both institutional and institutionalized.

2.2.   Assessing EU development policy with a feminist institutionalist approach

A feminist institutionalist approach offers a way forward for research on the integration of gender equality in EU development policy in three respects. First, the basic premise is that institutions or 'rules of the game' are crucial in structuring political life as they constrain and enable political actors and political outcomes (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 599). Institutions are defined as 'relatively enduring features of political and social life (rules, norms and procedures) that structure behaviour and cannot be changed easily or instantaneously' (Waylen 2014: 213). To understand how political actors and outcomes are determined by institutions, it is necessary not only to look at formal rules, such as the binding stipulations in the ACP-EU Cotonou Agreement, but also at the informal aspects including 'unspoken and accepted norms which may guide decision making' (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 612) in the daily practice of the Brussels Headquarters and the EU Delegations in the partner countries. Researching 'the hidden life of institutions' helps to 'understand not only how both formal and informal rules, norms and practices are gendered but also how they' *interact* (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 608). Informal institutions, embedded in the everyday practices of the EU's external services, are disguised as standard and influence formal institutional design and outcomes in multiple ways: they 'can work to undermine, replace, support, or work in parallel with the formal institutions' (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 606). The outcomes of these interactions between the gendered formal and informal rules and norms are thus complex and can best be understood through 'in-depth context-specific analysis' as 'each political arena operates according to its own gendered "logic of appropriateness"' (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 608). To allow for this complexity, data collection and analysis combined a variety of official EU policy documents and reports[3] – published and unpublished – with semi-structured expert interviews in Brussels and Kigali. Interviews were carried out with both European and Rwandan policy-makers as well as with gender advocates and aimed at examining the formal and informal institutions that determine the implementation of policy programmes on the ground, as well as the actors, networks and processes involved.

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[3] I analysed policy documents, reports and assessments from the European Commission, its EU Gender Advisory Services and the Train4Dev Gender Expert Group (both financed by the Europe-Aid co-operation office), including the European Commission 2002 'Participation of Non-State Actors in EC Development Policy', COM(2002) 598, 7 November; the 2007 European Commission Communication 'Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development Cooperation' COM(2007) 100; the 2007 Republic of Rwanda and European Community Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for the period 2008-2013; the 'EC Initiatives on Gender Equality in Development Quarterly Newsletter', December 2009 (edited by Europe-Aid and the EU Gender Advisory Services); the 'EU Initiatives on Gender Equality in Development Thematic Issue: EU Strategy on Gender and Aid Effectiveness', October 2010 (edited by Europe-Aid and the EU Gender Advisory Services); the EU Gender Advisory Services 2010 Report on the Basic Gender Training 'Promotion of Gender Equality in EU Development Cooperation'; the EU Gender Advisory Services 2010 Report Gender Focal Persons Workshop 'What Can GFPs Do to Promote Gender Equality in EU Development Cooperation?', Brussels 16-18 June 2010; the 2011 Train4Dev Gender Expert Group 'Dripping Hollows Out Rock: Enhancing Capacity for Gender Mainstreaming. Assessment on Needs for Enhancing Capacity Development in Gender Mainstreaming', 30.9.2011; the 2010 EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development; the 2011 Commission staff working document 'Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development 2010-2015'; the 2012 Commission staff working document '2012 Report on the Implementation of the EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment in Development 2010-2015'; and the 2013 Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Rwanda 'Mid Term Review Conclusions Rwanda'.

Second, a feminist institutionalist lens adds a gender power dimension to the analysis which reveals – from a gender perspective – 'not only who has the power to make institutional design decisions but also why some unexpected outcomes occur and why some reforms are more difficult to achieve than others' (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 600). Gendering new institutionalism thus establishes gender as a key dimension of institutions which is particularly relevant in the case of external policy and diplomacy as these have been policy domains typically dominated by men. A feminist institutionalist lens places this obvious but often under-researched power dimension at the forefront of institutional analysis and recognizes that institutions both reflect and reinforce asymmetrical gender relations (Kenny and Mackay 2009).

Third, feminist institutionalism is 'concerned with the voice and participation of women, women's and feminist movements in gender mainstreaming' (True 2010: 198). As gender mainstreaming involves 'a process of institutionalization… [it] thus raises the issue of voice' – whose voices are present and which agents are systematically silenced in the policymaking process (True 2010: 198). Indeed, as we saw earlier, a prerequisite for an effective and gender-equal development agenda is for women to have a voice '[in shaping] the objectives, priorities and strategies of development' (Jahan 1995: 127). In line with this principle, the EU has made binding commitments to foster a participatory gender mainstreaming approach and to include partner countries' non-state actors in political dialogue, planning, implementation and the evaluation of results (ACP-EC 2000; European Commission 2007, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary not only to interview bureaucratic insiders (from the EU and Rwandan administration) but also to examine the perspective of a variety of important Rwandan gender advocates.[4]

3. The case study: Gender in EU development aid towards Rwanda through a feminist institutionalist lens

In the following sections, I consider how a disconnect between formal and informal institutions (both in terms of contradictory goals and a decoupling between the Brussels Headquarters and the country level) leads to the implementation of a gender-neutral and instrumental policy. I will also show how, in this context, institutional gender policy actors act merely ceremonially and reveal a clear-cut power imbalance between gender policy and non-gender policy staff, and between male and female staff. Finally, I will demonstrate how the voice of women and their movement is being marginalized by the EU and will argue that this is particularly problematic in the Rwandan context.

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[4] Eleven interviewees were representatives of Rwandan civil society working on gender equality, three represented international non-governmental organizations in the field of gender equality. Initially, important interviewees were identified by a literature review, followed by a snowballing technique during the course of the interviews.

3.1. Decoupling between formal and informal institutional systems

For the period 2008 to 2013, EU aid towards Rwanda is defined in a Country Strategy Paper and a National Indicative Programme[5] and totals 290 million euros. The EU provides general budget support through the Millennium Development Goals contract to the country's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy which represents 60 percent of the budget. The two priority areas next to the general budget support are rural development and infrastructure. Additional areas, such as governance, trade support and technical cooperation facility, are also included in the programme.

Analysing the programming of EU development aid towards Rwanda reveals that gender is being included extensively in the country *analysis*, but to a much lesser extent in the *strategy* and *budget*. In the Country Strategy Paper's analysis, several problems of gender inequality are mentioned including poverty, HIV/AIDS and women's limited access to employment, credit and higher education. In the response strategy – which outlines the development strategy – it is stated that crosscutting issues will be mainstreamed in two select sectors: rural development and infrastructure. However, in the National Indicative Programme – which is the most concrete part of the document – including timetables, budgets and measurement indicators – there were only two general phrases stating that the participation of women/vulnerable groups would be ensured in employment creation connected to rural development and infrastructure. Unfortunately, it was not specified how this would be guaranteed. Gender seems to get filtered out when measures become more concrete.

The EU Delegation's main partners are the Government of Rwanda's Ministries of Finance, Agriculture and Infrastructure. Commonly agreed on performance indicators are used for the disbursement of EU aid tranches. This set of indicators does not include gender indicators, with the exception of one indicator on the girl/boy ratio in primary and secondary education and one on the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel (European Commission 2013). Maternal mortality rates are systematically monitored, though they are not part of the set of key EU indicators. To successfully reach these targets and ensure adequate design, implementation and monitoring of activities, regular high-level and technical meetings between representatives from the EU and the Rwandan Ministries take place.

During my visit[6] to the EU Delegation in Rwanda, I learned that, in fact, 'gender is not yet mainstreamed'[7] in European Development Fund aid and is not discussed during political and budget dialogue. In practice, gender is largely absent from the sector budget support for infrastructure and rural development as well as in the general budget support (with the exceptions noted above). Although it was stated by the Delegation that gender will be

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[5] The drafting process of these agreements is initiated in the partner country and is based on general guidelines provided by the EU Headquarters. The National Authorising Office (mostly located in the Ministry of Finance or Economic Affairs and Planning), along with the EU Delegation, draws up a first draft, including an indication of the main priorities for EU action in the country. This draft is then presented to the European Commission Headquarters in Brussels, which produces a second draft, which is in turn circulated to the National Authorizing Office for another round of consultations. Once redrafted, the Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme are sent back to the Commission Headquarters for final adoption.
[6] From 21 May until 17 June 2011.
[7] Interview Programme Officer, EU Delegation Kigali, 31 May 2011a.

included in the next round of development policy programming (2014-2019) that is being prepared, as it is 'now … a requirement'[8], it is unclear whether this will actually be the case. After all, the integration of gender issues in EU development aid *has been* a formal requirement since 1995. The case thus demonstrates how gender has become invisible on the ground. Given the fact that the Rwandan government is making efforts to collect data on gender inequality and has implemented gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting policies, the neglect of the EU Delegation is remarkable. During interviews at the European Commission in Brussels, the resistance of the government of the partner countries and the absence of national gender indicators were put forward as major reasons why gender mainstreaming in EU development aid is slowly progressing.[9] This case study counters this claim and indicates that the reluctance to gender mainstream should be situated elsewhere.

Why is it then that – almost two decades after Beijing – institutional redesign at the EU level is still so difficult? Why is it that despite the inclusion of gender components in the programming of EU aid, gender nearly disappears in development practice? The sociological institutionalist concept of 'decoupling' can help to explain the weak relationship between policy formulation and implementation (Schmidt 2005: 118-126). Loosely coupled institutional systems can 'pursue multiple goals and objectives, and attempts to achieve a tighter coupling between policy and delivery are often resisted' (Mackay, Monro, and Waylen 2009: 258). The EU can indeed be considered such a loosely coupled institutional system pursuing multiple and often competing goals, with its gender equality project crafted on top and out of an economic edifice oriented principally towards economic growth and competiveness (Weiner and MacRae 2014, *this special issue*). Elements of 'formal "ceremonial structure"', such as the more recent Treaty stipulation that gender equality is a basic EU value, are thus decoupled from activities on the ground (Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009: 258). The case clearly shows that there is a significant disconnect between formal and informal institutional environments. While the highest formal (i.e. binding) EU rules are very clear that 'equality between women and men' is a core objective, that has to be integrated into *all* aspects of its *operations and policies* (Treaty of Amsterdam 1997: Art. 2), this is not matched in the EU's external services on the ground which tend to marginalize gender equality issues and/or implement gender mainstreaming in an instrumental and limited manner. Feminist research has highlighted that the informal 'rules of the game' should be seen as *institutions in themselves,* next to and in interaction with formal institutions (Chappell and Waylen 2013). Informal mechanisms are thus equally important in understanding processes of continuity and change and variable outcomes as they 'shape institutional processes, developments and outcomes' (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell 2010: 581) and 'are perpetuated by institutional actors who "embody and enact"' its norms and scripts (Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009: 255). There is thus an obvious clash between the formal institutional rules stipulating that gender should be mainstreamed in every policy and programme and the informal *modus operandi* in the EU Delegation stipulating that a gender

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[8] Interview Programme Officer, EU Delegation Kigali, 31 May 2011b.
[9] Interview Policy Desk Officer and Gender Focal Point, DG External Relations, European Commission, Brussels, 15 January 2010; Interview Policy Officer for Gender Equality, DG Development and Relations with Africa, Caribbean and Pacific States, European Commission, Brussels, 22 January 2010.

perspective is redundant and can be applied merely formally. In addition, there is an institutional decoupling taking place at the level of the EU Headquarters in Brussels on the one hand and the EU Delegations in the partner countries on the other. A reform process introduced between 2002 and 2004 to improve the efficiency of the EU external assistance gave the Delegations full responsibility for the implementation of assistance programmes in partner countries. However, at the same time, the EU Delegations still have to interact with and answer to (but not in a clear line of reporting) the Headquarters in Brussels. In this 'complex web of inter-relations', 'agents can exploit conflicting preferences among their principals to increase their autonomy' especially when 'control mechanisms are not functioning well and communication … is hampered by bureaucratic sclerosis' (Henökl 2013: 2). As I show in the next section, this decoupling between the formal and the informal institutions leads to a limited, 'purely formal' gender mainstreaming policy in practice, where only basic and instrumental gender issues are included (such as maternal health). Less evident policy areas such as transport and agriculture are – falsely – assumed to be gender-neutral.

3.2. Instrumental and gender-neutral policies

As Rwanda has a successful record of attaining rapid progress towards budget support indicators related to the Millennium Development Goals, the EU has allocated the committed general budget support tranches (European Commission 2013). However some authors have criticized Rwandan policymakers' exclusive focus on quantitative results that generate donor funding while neglecting the processes through which results are achieved (Ansoms 2009). For example, the appraisable achievements are at least partly the result of the forcefully implemented obligation for all Rwandans to cover themselves against pregnancy or illness under a health insurance system known as *Mutuelles de Santé*. However, no attention is paid to the significant financial burden of the *Mutuelle*s' fees on households' limited resources. Moreover, the fee, approximately 1000 Rwandan francs per household member for ordinary smallholder farmers, was recently (in June 2011) raised to 3000 Rwandan francs. This obligatory fee competes with many other financial obligations (land registration, costs for building according to government-defined standards, costs for cooperative membership, etc...) that weight heavily upon the resources of an impoverished people (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013). The integration of a limited number of gender issues connected to the Millennium Development Goals (e.g., the girl boy/ratio in primary and secondary education and the indicator on the percentage of births attended by skilled health personnel), thus seems to be instrumental to other goals such as the overall objective of economic development and societal modernization and neglects underlying processes that aggravate social inequality. In interviews with gender activists, it was pointed out that the potential of such formalistic and macro-level oriented policies is weak as they lead to the Rwandan government 'focussing too much on numbers'[10] as this 'attracts donor money'.[11] The government was also criticized for working too top-down and neglecting grassroots' needs. They argued that the EU's budget

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[10] Interview international non-governmental organisation (female, Rwandan), 16 June 2011.
[11] Interview international donor organisation (female, non-Rwandan), 12 June 2011.

support does not reach women in poverty. As one activist commented: 'On the local level, we don't see any of this. Rural women are literally working day and night. What is happening to ease their burden? Nothing. Why are there so many poor women? Politics needs to be there for the people'.[12]

Second, the specific objectives of the EU's rural development aid programme are 'to: a) strengthen agricultural productivity in order to ensure food security and increased incomes; b) develop rural infrastructure to provide a conducive environment for rural economic growth; c) promote off-farm employment; and d) ensure environmental sustainability' (Republic of Rwanda – European Community 2007: 32). The focus seems to be on the economic aspects, while the problems of gender inequality mentioned in the country analysis, such as gendered poverty, or women's limited access to credit and higher education have disappeared. Furthermore, it is unclear how the participation of women and vulnerable groups will be ensured in rural job creation.

With regards to agricultural policies, Ansoms and Rostagno (2012) have shown how agricultural professionalization, intensification and enterprise development through strategies such as monocropping, regional crop specialization and land registration, as well as a market-orientation in all production activities are not in the interest of smallholder peasants. In fact, modernization objectives do not match with smallholder peasants' priorities, as they expose smallholders to excessive risks (Ansoms 2010). Moreover, these policies also have gender dimensions, given that subsistence production is particularly the domain of female farmers. Traditionally, women have been very active in the production of staple food feeding the family, whereas cash crop production and marketization is generally considered to be men's business (de Lame 2005). De Lame explains how in the pre-genocide context, an increasing monetization of the economy affected female peasants on two counts: 'they were losers at home, but gained nothing in the outside world' (de Lame 2005: 76; Debusscher and Ansoms 2013).

Contemporary agricultural productivity policies risk having similar results, as they fail to take account of 'the gendered structure of labour and time allocation' in agricultural activities (Ansoms and Holvoet 2008). As Ansoms and Holvoet (2008: 148) explain, 'given the enormous time and work burden that women face in terms of reproductive activities, it is obvious that they do not compete on equal terms with men in the productive arena'. Modernization policies that push farmers into a market-oriented and maximal-productivity logic – without paying attention to gender dimensions – are likely to have a negative impact on women's situations in household relations (Debusscher and Ansoms 2013).

Finally, the objective of EU cooperation in the infrastructure domain was 'to support economic growth by strengthening the infrastructure essential for the economic development of the country' (Republic of Rwanda – European Community 2007: 33) and focussed mainly on regional transport and electricity. Again, an instrumental economic framing seems dominant. In the National Indicative Programme, crosscutting issues were to be addressed through 'a labour-intensive public works approach' from which 'vulnerable groups' could

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[12] Interview civil society representative (female, Rwandan), 8 June 2011.

benefit (Republic of Rwanda – European Community 2007: 34-35, 43), though it was not specified how this would be implemented. An explicit gender dimension seemed to be lacking and the performance indicators outlined focussed only on technical or 'gender-neutral' issues such as rural and core road conditions, maintenance or general access to electricity. Nevertheless, transport in Rwanda is a gendered issue as women and men have different transport needs and priorities, and are often affected differently by transport interventions. For instance, building roads for motorized transport will frequently not benefit rural women, as they 'mainly work and travel on foot in and around the village on paths leading to local shopping areas, markets, water collection points, and firewood gathering sites' (African Development Bank 2013: 90). Likewise, urban transportation projects designed to transport people to and from employment centers may be inadequate for women who often combine income generation with unpaid care work such as taking children to school and visiting the market. The failure to gender mainstream transport thus negatively affects women in several ways and hampers their access to markets, education, employment, friends and family. In addition, women's basic need for safety can be jeopardized when for example, good roads are in isolated areas or lack adequate lighting (African Development Bank 2013).

As the above examples highlight, the decoupling of formal and informal institutional systems leads in practice to a limited and merely formal gender mainstreaming policy. The EU Delegation wants to be in line with the Headquarters' formal requirements by paying lip service to gender mainstreaming in its programming and introducing a limited set of gender indicators in the implementation. The focus is on the economic aspects of policies which are assumed to be gender-neutral, such as agriculture and infrastructure. Gender indicators are only included when instrumental to the overall objective of economic development and societal modernization (such as attaining the Millennium Development Goals).

3.3. Who acts (ceremonially)?

Although in principle all staff members share the responsibility for gender mainstreaming, in practice, effective implementation remains highly dependent on the skill, commitment and time invested by individual staff members. At the EU Delegation level, this is often the mandate of the Gender Focal Person (GFP) – defined as 'a member who is responsible for facilitating the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality issues in the activities of the Delegation' (EU Gender Advisory Services 2010: 36). In 2007, the EU Headquarters requested that each Delegation appoint a GFP as it had (re)established the expertise-sharing network for EU gender focal persons. This network consists of GFPs of the EU Delegations as well as representatives from all external DGs. In response to the European Commission's request, 66 EU Delegations in partner countries nominated a GFP that year. The Delegation in Rwanda was not among these early adopters. In the run-up to the launch of the 2010 Gender Action Plan, the European Commission again insisted Delegations appoint a GFP. It was in response to this that the EU Delegation for Rwanda appointed its first GFP. Before then – and thus during the drafting of the current aid programmes – there had not been anyone explicitly working on gender equality in the Delegation. The person appointed as GFP

in Rwanda is a local contract agent with no previous work experience on gender. The GFP position in the EU Delegations has been more or less voluntary, involving tasks performed on top of the staff member's main duties. In the past four years, however, the EU femocrats in Brussels have pushed the EU Delegations to formalize the GFP role and these tasks are now supposed to be included in their job description.

Despite the pressure from the EU Headquarters to formalize the GFP's role, there is no time or budget allocated for the function and the person takes these tasks on top of existing job responsibilities. It is therefore not surprising that, in practice, the GFP's role in Rwanda seems to be performed rather formally and symbolically. For example the GFP sent out an email to the development partners in Rwanda on International Women's Day to stress the EU's commitment to gender equality or attends meetings in Kigali which are considered important for gender equality. This formal 'ceremonial' behaviour should not be attributed to the commitment or the interest of the specific staff member, but rather to the informal institution's 'logic of appropriateness' (Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009: 256-258) which encompasses a general lack of interest for gender equality issues among most staff members in the Delegation, including high ranking seniors. In June 2010, the GFP attended a two day training on the promotion of gender equality in EU development cooperation in the Headquarters in Brussels, followed by a three day GFP Workshop on how to play an active role as a GFP. Returning to Rwanda, the GFP attempted to organize a Delegation staff meeting on gender equality in EU development but this was repeatedly postponed by the people invited, and was eventually cancelled. In the informal standard operating procedure of the bureaucracy, it is acceptable to put a gender meeting on the bottom of your priority list. Such informally understood conventions and norms are embedded in the everyday practice of a bureaucracy. They are disguised as standard and taken for granted, but they are also 'particularly sticky and resistant to change' as they represent the *status quo* (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 605).

While these 'institutional "ways of doing"' are indeed 'not fixed, they are difficult to change' by one person because the body of institutional actors continuously acts according to its norms and scripts (Mackay, Monro and Waylen 2009: 255). For example, although, in principle, all staff have the opportunity to follow voluntary gender trainings organised by DG DEVCO, there is little incentive for staff to invest time in this, as gender mainstreaming clearly has not been a management priority for the Delegation in Rwanda. Or as one staff member put it: 'It's not that they actively resist it, they just forget about it'.[13]

Furthermore, as stipulated in the 2010 Gender Action Plan, the EU Headquarters wishes to foster stronger ties between the European donors in the partner countries on the issue of gender equality. One of the specific objectives of the Action Plan is to 'strengthen the lead role of the EU in promoting gender equality in development' by increasing 'coordination and coherence between the Commission and the member states, as well as with other donors, actors and organisations' (European Commission 2010: 5-6). As specified in the Action Plan, this implies that 'an EU donor is appointed as gender lead donor in each partner country for

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[13] Interview Programme Officer, EU Delegation Kigali, 31 May 2011b.

the period 2010-2015' and that three 'Member States are associated to joint work on gender' (European Commission 2010: 5). In response to these requirements from the Brussels Headquarters, the European Heads of Cooperation in Rwanda have decided that the Swedish Delegation should be the lead donor, accompanied by the EU and two associated member states, to jointly work on gender. So far however, nothing seems to have materialised. Being in line with the formal rules of the game, to have a European donor-network on gender equality, is thus ceremonially important for high-level actors, while informally the initiative is stripped of meaning.

With the UN, on the other hand, there has been a strong partnership, including a national consultation on Gender Responsive Budgeting and Aid Effectiveness in Rwanda in 2009, a High Level Global Meeting on Increasing Accountability and Development Effectiveness through Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting in Kigali 2011 and a 2011 report evaluating the agriculture and gender strategy for Rwanda. These initiatives are not EU Delegation initiatives but are part of the on-going cooperation of the EU Headquarters with UN Women on integrating gender responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda. In Rwanda, these initiatives are carried out and monitored by UN agencies in cooperation with the Rwandan government. Again, a representative of the EU Delegation will be 'ceremonially' present on these events, but there has been no concrete cooperation.

3.4. Gender power imbalances at multiple levels

DG DEVCO has trained an impressive number of EU external services staff on gender mainstreaming in development cooperation (over 2000 people since 2004). However, taking into account the hierarchical position of these staff members, an interesting power dimension materializes. Large parts of the trained EU staff have been contract agents with temporary assignments who have since left the EU institutions (Train4Dev Gender Expert Group 2011). It thus becomes obvious that the temporary and least powerful actors in the bureaucracy are becoming more skilled in gender mainstreaming, while the more powerful permanent officials seem more interested in other training opportunities. In addition, the previous section has shown how in a context of 'gender apathy' a person with gender expertise (in the case the GFP) is marginalized by (senior) staff members for whom gender is a non-issue. Indeed, staff members responsible for fostering gender mainstreaming are very often female contract agents with temporary assignments (as opposed to permanent officials) in non-decision-making positions. This is the case not only in the EU Delegation in Rwanda but in most EU Delegations around the world (Train4Dev Gender Expert Group 2011). There is thus an obvious power asymmetry, to the disadvantage of staff working on gender equality, which manifests itself in the struggle over *which* ideas matter and *who* accumulates resources, privilege and opportunity. This power difference does not only occur between gender policy and non-gender policy staff specifically but also between female and male staff more generally. Indeed, within the European institutions, gender imbalances in senior policymaking positions are widespread, especially in those institutions focusing on external rather than internal policies (Debusscher and True 2009). The gender imbalance is particularly pertinent

among the staff working in the EU Delegations. Within the EU Delegation in Rwanda, the pattern is similar. While there is a gender imbalance in terms of overall personnel working in the Delegation (64 per cent male and 36 per cent female staff), the gender imbalance is even more significant when taking into account position in the hierarchy. For example, the Head of the Delegation and all Heads of sections are male except for the Head of the Administration Section (86 per cent male versus 14 female senior staff). For the Delegation's secretaries, the situation is reversed: 86 per cent female and 14 per cent male. While men traditionally 'have been thought to possess the appropriate skills, knowledge and temperament to design and maintain the institutions of the state, … most women … have tended to be relegated to supporting roles' (Chappell and Waylen 2013: 601). These gender stereotypes seem to be reproduced within the EU bureaucracy as there is a pertinent hierarchical gender imbalance, not only in this specific Delegation but in the external services of the EU in general. Such a stereotypical 'organizational culture which is male-biased in terms of attitudes, recruitment, working conditions and structures' will indeed tend to discriminate against female staff, clients and aid recipients (Moser and Moser 2005: 16).

3.5. Voice

At first glance, the planning document for EU aid towards Rwanda seemed to be promising as is noted in meetings with both local and international non-state actors in the drafting of the Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme (Republic of Rwanda – European Community 2007). However, organizations working on gender equality were not explicitly mentioned. In addition, interviews at the Delegation level revealed an indifference towards women's organisations expertise. An EU staff member[14] commented that the inclusion of civil society promoting gender equality has no significant added value as the EU works mainly through budget support. 'The Rwandan government is already performing well on promoting gender equality' and civil society has 'no capacity'. Again, we can see a clear mismatch between the formal and informal institutional norms. In addition, this statement is contradicted in the literature which describes the Rwandan women's movement as a significant and active sector of civil society (Burnet 2008). Indeed, of the eleven major Rwandan civil society organisations working on gender equality interviewed, none of them received an invitation to participate in the EU Country Strategy Paper drafting process meetings in 2007. All of them, however, expressed their interest in participating in EU consultations if invited.

As noted above, some representatives of civil society were also particularly critical of the large amount of budget support the EU is providing to their government as they feel civil society is being 'marginalized' in Rwanda. As one gender advocate[15] noted: 'The aid effectiveness agenda talks about predictability and sufficient funding! But this is just for the government. Civil society is being ignored'. Indeed, several authors have commented on the

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[14] Interview Programme Officer, EU Delegation Kigali, 31 May 2011a.
[15] Interview civil society representative (female, Rwandan), 15 June 2011.

increasingly limited scope for civil society to participate in Rwandan policy-making. As mentioned by Gready (2010: 641) 'the current regime's preferred *modus operandi* for civil society remains service delivery' in line with government programmes. The regime employs a wide range of strategies to manage and control civil society's functioning. For civil society representatives 'who step out of line…there is a price to pay' (Gready 2010: 642). However, several of the representatives of the women's movement interviewed see their role differently, stating that 'our objectives are not those of the government'[16] and stressing that they want to be able to 'critically analyse what is being done and how things should be done'.[17] However, numerous factors are gradually limiting the women's movement's watchdog role and involvement in policy monitoring, lobbying and advocacy. One gender activist stated that 'we [the women's movement] are not as dynamic as we used to be with the inheritance law'.[18] Another interviewee confirmed this, saying that 'civil society was much more active ten years ago than it is now'.[19]

The EU seems to aggravate this trend, not only by predominantly using budget support as an aid mechanism but also by the specific conditions of its – limited – civil society funding. As is the case in most EU Delegations, the EU Delegation in Rwanda is using thematic local calls for proposals to support non-state actors, including women's organisations. Although Rwandan non-state actors can propose and coordinate actions without having to go into a partnership with an EU-based NGO, recent research has highlighted imbalanced relations in multi-partnerships in favour of international NGOs and their causes (Minoia 2012). Several Rwandan NGOs noted that it is difficult to apply for EU funding due to strict bureaucratic funding criteria. The EU's eligibility criteria are based on an organisation's legal status, pre-acquired financial capacities, previous experience in international projects, work plan, budget formulation and short term deliverables. The strict bureaucratic setup makes it difficult for Rwandan non-state actors to fit their initiatives into 'a successful project format' and renders projects into aid industry products rewarding the most competitive organisations (Minoia 2012: 87). In Rwanda, the support for non-state actors amounts to 7.5 million euros and the priority areas encompassed governance, justice, reconciliation, human rights, social issues, education, gender and health. In the gender area, ten organisations[20] have received EU grants. None of these organisations are gender equality or women's organisations and only two are Rwandan (including the District of Ngoma which is strictly speaking a Local Authority). Only one Rwandan women's organisation, Haguruka, managed to receive a grant for the justice priority area. In total, Haguruka applied three times for EU funding, of which only one project was successful and for a relatively small amount.[21] To write an EU proposal, Haguruka hires a consultant for two months. Applying for funding is quite expensive for Rwandan NGOs. The funding procedure is thus biased in favour of more affluent INGOs and endangers Rwandan

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[16] Interview civil society representative (female, Rwandan), 8 June 2011.
[17] Interview civil society representative (female, Rwandan), 10 June 2011.
[18] Interview civil society representative (female, Rwandan), 10 June 2011.
[19] Interview international donor organisation (female, non-Rwandan), 12 June 2011.
[20] Action Aid, PREFED, Mirovni Institute Zavod, District de Ngoma, Kindernothilfe, CARE UK, Hope for Living, Uyisenga N'Manzi, Minority Rights Group and TROCAIRE.
[21] Haguruka received 18,000 euros for 2010, compared to Action Aid or Kindernothilfe which received 150,000 and 162,655, respectively. A project generally lasts two to three years.

women's country ownership. In the context of an increasingly authoritarian state, the structural neglect of Rwandan women's organisations in EU civil society funding mechanisms is particularly problematic.

Although the EU Delegation has committed itself to develop 'capacity building measures, especially for local NSAs, to allow increasing participation in policy debates' (Republic of Rwanda – European Community 2007: 15) as well as programmes in which with non-state actors 'can address both roles [service delivery and an advocacy or monitoring role]' in reality this seems to be lacking. Looking at these practices with a feminist institutionalist lens it becomes obvious that the institutional structures, practices and norms at the EU Delegation constrain 'the expression and articulation of marginalized perspectives' (Mackay, Kenny and Chappell 2010: 582) while focussing on certain powerful elite-actors, in this case Rwandan policy-makers and international NGOs. Despite the formal rule to the contrary, the voices of Rwandan gender activists are not heard.

Conclusion

As the oldest issue area where the EU has advanced gender mainstreaming, scholars have generally considered development policy to be a particularly amenable policy field for the integration of gender equality goals. The Rwandan state, on the other hand, has created a favourable environment for enhancing gender mainstreaming and has demonstrated a sustained high-level formal commitment to gender equality. With both the EU and Rwanda receptive to the idea of gendering development, one would expect particularly fruitful ground for a successful case of gender mainstreaming. Rather, despite a receptive partner country environment and an espoused commitment from the EU, gender mainstreaming *still* did not occur. The case study demonstrated how gender was filtered out in development practice on the ground. Although gender was included extensively in the country analysis, it disappeared almost entirely in the strategy and budget. Apart from two general budget support indicators connected to maternal health and basic education, gender equality issues got filtered out of the sector budget support for infrastructure and rural development as well as the additional areas. To explain this process of gender getting 'lost', a feminist institutionalist lens points us towards 'the structure', towards 'the EU as a whole' (Kronsell 2012: 23) to see 'which gendered dynamics' are at play 'within the EU's institutional machinery' (Weiner and MacRae 2014, *this special issue*). Indeed, the largest stumbling block to putting gender sensitive policies into practice seems to be a broader institutional weakness.

The case shows a significant disconnect or decoupling between formal and informal institutional environments, as the highest – binding – EU rules are not matched by the informal norms, practices and logics in the EU's external services. This decoupling can be situated both in terms of contradictory and conflicting goals – for example, economic goals clashing with social justice and gender equality, as well as in terms of a disconnect between the Brussels Headquarters and the Delegation level. Indeed, the EU Headquarters remain in charge of important policy directions and budgets as well as the final adoption of the Country Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme, while the implementation of these

agreements is located exclusively at the Delegation and country level. This disconnect between formal and informal institutions leads to a principle-agent relationship where the EU Delegation merely wants to be *formally* in line with Headquarters' guidelines and fosters a limited and instrumental policy guided by gendered assumptions, such as the 'gender-neutrality' of infrastructure and agriculture. These gendered assumptions further reproduce stereotypes and strengthen an institutional climate where there is an obvious power asymmetry, to the disadvantage of women and staff working on gender equality, in the struggle over which ideas matter and who accumulates institutional resources. Finally, the institutional practices and norms at the EU Delegation – including the almost exclusive use of budget support as well as the strict bureaucratic criteria for civil society funding – structurally marginalize the voices of Rwandan women and their movement. This process endangers Rwandan women's country ownership which is particularly problematic in the context of an increasingly authoritarian state.

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