

The Organizational Dynamics of Knowledge Production

How the Dutch intelligence community produces knowledge of complex
conflict environments: the case of MINUSMA, Mali



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ABSTRACT

This study examines the organizational dynamics of knowledge production within the Dutch intelligence community, particularly as it aims to produce local and non-kinetic knowledge. Through the use of qualitative research methods, it is found that knowledge production is practiced based on the assumption that knowledge is neutral and can therefore be used to the advantage of the organization by knowledge management. Such practices induce knowledge to be produced through an infrastructure that collects local 'data' and aggregates it up to the central level where it has to be fused into a concise prognosis for the staff at the central Head Quarters. Through such practice, the military organization constructs a 'sense of neutrality' of knowledge that legitimizes the decisions they base on it. However, this study demonstrates that such a neutral separation between intelligence and decision-making is ambiguous, because it is demonstrated that knowledge is produced through the constant negotiation over the boundaries between the two.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ASIFU - All Source Intelligence Fusion Unit

CIR - Commander's Intelligence Requirement

CMI - Civil-Military Cooperation

COIN - Counterinsurgency

DDR - Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration

DOPS - Directorate of Operations

FHQ - Field Head Quarters

ICP - Intelligence Collection Plan

IDP - Internally Displaced Person

JISTARC - Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting, Acquisition, Reconnaissance Command

MINUSMA - United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali

MIVD - Military Intelligence- and Security Service

MNLA - Mouvements National de Libération de l'Azawad

MoD - Ministry of Defence

MUJAO - Mouvement pour l'Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest

NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization

OCHA - Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OPSEC - Operational Security

SOP - Standard Operational Procedures

SoSA - System of Systems Analysis

SRSG - Special Representative of the Secretary General

TFU - Task Force Uruzgan

U2 - United 2

UN - United Nations

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*"I was standing outside with the general having a chat. I was looking at the mountains and said 'too bad, isn't it?' The general asked what I meant and I said: 'If there were snow now, in January, that means that around April it would begin to melt. The rivers would run full, lands could be irrigated and the farmers would have enough to eat – which would make their children happy and friendly. That would make them less keen on picking up arms or cultivating poppy.' That is predictable, it is simply a matter of extrapolating from what you observe."*¹

¹ Int. Code: INTEL09, interview held with the author on 04-06-2014

INTRODUCTION

Many contemporary violent conflicts do not allow for a simple analysis. In most, military interventions from treaty organizations such as NATO or the UN remain unable to turn the tide. Until this day, NATO forces have yet to achieve the desired stability in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. The complexities that are faced have resulted in a common wisdom that suggests military interventions are 'nowadays' dealing with "wicked problems".² True or not, conflicts do seem to become increasingly intra-state of nature and, in many cases, seem to be rooted in the social fabric of communities (Demmers, 2012). Due to the complexities in which military organizations manoeuvre, unintended consequences of military interventions are abounding (Aoi, Coning & Thakur, 2007). In response, NATO-member military organizations increasingly seek address the "root causes" of conflicts.³

Many military organizations have assigned their intelligence community to produce knowledge about such local, social complexities in operational environments.⁴ But how do they unravel these wicked problems? One could expect it to be quite a difficult endeavour as a military organization to producing knowledge about local complexities while covering large geographical area to which it is endogenous. In addition, such sets of knowledge stand in contrast with the traditional practices of intelligence that have developed over the Cold War (Davies, 2004) and is also reflected in the military definition of intelligence: "Intelligence is the product resulting from the processing of information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations."⁵

So how do they produce such *non-traditional* intelligence as an organization? Interestingly, the Dutch intelligence has constructed an

² NATO (2010). NATO Counterinsurgency Guidelines

³ NATO (2010). NATO Counterinsurgency Guidelines

⁴ NATO (2010). NATO Counterinsurgency Guidelines

⁵ MoD (2012). Joint Doctrine Publicatie Inlichtingen

advanced intelligence infrastructure to acquire local knowledge. Through a variety of channels and procedures it is assumed that the commander can be presented with objective and neutral knowledge. However, in such allegedly complex conflict environments, is knowledge something that can be *managed* in that way? Is knowledge production merely a matter of putting all the people in the right place so that knowledge will surface through the intelligence chain? Several authors criticize such a preoccupation with the management of knowledge in organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Alvesson 1993; Bourdieu, 1991). Instead, they argue that a sense of objectivity of knowledge is constructed through the dynamic social practices of the members of organizations.

To understand how through what dynamics organizations produce knowledge, the Dutch intelligence community will serve as a case study - as it is an organization that is to produce knowledge about complex and dynamic conflict environments. The central argument is that the organizational dynamics within the intelligence community (1) firstly induce a constant aggregation of knowledge from the local level to the Head Quarters, which needs intelligence products to be short, on time, and provide predictions; and (2) secondly, these dynamics create an ambiguous sense of neutrality, because although intelligence is arbitrarily separated from decision-making, the two continuously influence each other.

The outline is as follows. The first chapter will inductively study how the *practice* of knowledge production is constituted through the experiences of the Dutch intelligence community from different missions. Subsequently the second chapter will more deductively examine how these practices are manifested in the currently unfolding Dutch intelligence contribution to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

THE DEBATE: KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN ORGANIZATIONS

How do we come to know, what we claim to know? Is knowledge external to social settings, or is it the product of the social interaction between actors? Swan, Newell & Gallier (1999) argue that human beings assimilate data to generate knowledge - as we do with the train schedule to determine which train to get into. It is assumed that - from the very core of the empirical object, via its subsequent aggregation into knowledge, until the course of action inferred from it - the neutrality and objectivity of knowledge remains uncontested. This is reflected in a definition of knowledge that Maglitta (2008) proposes: "data is raw numbers and facts, information is processed data, and knowledge is information made actionable" (Maglitta, 1996 in: Alavi & Leidner, 1999: 8). The latter definition implies that knowledge has its own ontological foundation that exists outside human beings. It exists by itself. A notion that is commonly understood in the philosophy of social science to be characteristic of a *positivist epistemology*: through the collection of empirical facts we can supposedly establish objective knowledge (Fay, 1996; Hollis, 1994).

For organization this means they need to manage knowledge in order to effectively exploit it (Nonaka, 1994). As such, knowledge is imperative to achieving technical, innovative and strategic advantages (Nonaka, 1994; Patriotta, 2003). In knowledge management studies, knowledge is increasingly viewed as a process of 'harvesting', focusing on ways to turn tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge (Nonaka, 1994; Nonaka & Von Krogh, 2009). It should be noted that although the objectivity of knowledge management has been nuanced over the years⁶, it is still considered quite neutrally as "the process of making available and amplifying knowledge created by individuals as well as crystallizing and connecting it to an organization's knowledge system" (Nonaka, 1994: 635). In line with this approach, knowledge production is to be enhanced by collecting and *sharing*

⁶ For an overview of how knowledge in organization is increasingly nuanced, see for example Nonaka (1994).

of information. Although sharing implies a more social dimension of knowledge production exists, attention in this regard immediately turns to the need of an effective organizational (digital) *infrastructure* (Boisot, 1998; Teece, 1998; Alavi & Leidner, 1999). Patriotta suggests that such a "managerial approach" is dominant in most organizations (2003: 350).

Authors from a constructivist paradigm heavily criticize the notion of knowledge as a neutral object. According to them, knowledge is socially constructed through the relations and interaction between human beings in a particular social context. In other words, knowledge is thought of as *inter-subjective*. As such, the empirical becomes knowledge not objectively through the aggregation of data, but through the meaning we assign to it. Critical scholars have argued that constructions of knowledge serve to maintain and justify structures of power (Foucault, 1976) Foucault (1976) approaches knowledge as the product of mechanisms of power, by which information is collated, either to justify action or to preserve the status quo. Hence, this view challenges the image of knowledge as objective and neutral.

Foucault (1976) extensively addresses such processes of signification and justification as part of institutional *practices*. According to Patriotta, too little attention in organizational studies has been paid to "the provisional, contested and controversial nature of knowledge creation processes" (Patriotta, 2003; Lanzara & Patriotta, 2001). In response to such *commodification* of knowledge, a constructivist view on knowledge production in organizations has emerged (Meyer & Rowan, 1997; Alvesson, 1993; Scott, 1987).

Similarly, Bourdieu extensively studied institutional practices of knowledge production. In his book *The Craft of Sociology* he argues that instead of separating knowledge from practice, he argues that researchers are justifying the existence of their profession by claiming their products to convey a transparent and objective *truth*. To justify that claim, Bourdieu (1991) argues that scholars have internalized practices that construct their neutrality and objectivity. In adherence, he observes a disposition of many

social scientists of his time towards *predicting* and *hypothesizing*. This set of dispositions is argued to be transposable to different social-scientific endeavours. Hence, his arguments in regard to the field of science resemble and are rooted in the broader focus of his work on the *logic of practice*.

Alvesson (1993) argues that organizations are upholding an understanding of knowledge as neutral due to the justification implied in "myths of technocracy" (1993: 999). Amongst others, he argues that organizations construct not only knowledge itself, but additionally perform particular practices of knowledge production that *legitimize* the decisions based upon that knowledge. (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Alvesson, 1993). Specialization and rationalization are argued to be fundamental features of these organizational practices of knowledge production: "We are lulled into a sense of false scientificity: specialism, rationality, and scientific predictability allay the uncertainties of the human condition" (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Alvesson, 1993: 999)⁷. Such a practice of knowledge production is allegedly aimed to "sting out the disorderly, cheatingly ambiguous character of social experience" (Fores, Glover & Lawrence, 1991: 97; Svensson, 1990).

The Dutch intelligence community⁸ is a case of an organization facing such complex and ambiguous social environments. It is tasked to become the "eyes and ears of MINUSMA."⁹ However, the organization's knowledge production process takes place in a sensitive, political and plausibly unpredictable conflict environment. As the saying goes: "the first casualty of war is the truth." In order to effectively fulfil its duty, the intelligence

⁷ Rationalization is understood, in accordance to Weber (1956:293 in Ritzer, 1998:42), as "methodical attainment of a definitely given and practical end by means of an increasingly precise calculation of adequate means"

⁸ This research focuses specifically on intelligence in military operations abroad, not on domestic or international political-strategic use of intelligence.

⁹ <http://www.defensie.nl/actueel/nieuws/2014/06/02/nederlandse-eenheden-overgedragen-aan-minusma>

community have highly specialized procedures and functions that organize its practice of knowledge production.¹⁰

Contributing to the complexity of their task is the fact that they are specifically assigned to provide the Force Commander with *non-traditional* intelligence, which is understood by the organization as predominantly Political, Economic, Social and Infrastructural knowledge. Included in non-traditional intelligence is the focus on *local*, 'non-kinetic', socio-political dynamics.¹¹ Such a type of intelligence has first been adopted by the Dutch military during the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) and can be considered substantially different from the emphases laid on 'weather, enemy and terrain' in *traditional* intelligence.¹² Because of such transformations the intelligence community can be considered a dynamic, *knowledge-intensive* organization. This plausibly makes it a case in which the practice of knowledge production is manifest and can be empirically studied.

So, how does the Dutch intelligence come to know what they think they know? Through what procedures do they justify their epistemological position towards the production of knowledge? What are their dispositions and presuppositions to what 'good knowledge' is? Which relations in the organization influence the production of knowledge? How are the boundaries *constructed* between actors dedicated to producing knowledge and those granted the authority of decision-making. How are these boundaries negotiated?

¹⁰ This has been observed during the author's fieldwork and will be demonstrated later, in chapter one.

¹¹ This imperative stems from experiences with the Taliban insurgency, where the Dutch experienced conflict dynamics to strongly vary geographically. See for example Dimitriu & De Graaff (2010). The different, considerably unspecified adjectives I state here are based on how different policy documents describe it. (MoD, 2010a, 2013a)

¹² Although the division between traditional and non-traditional intelligence is broadly defined here, there are also other categorisations circulating that separate the two. However, the most accurate and neutral division I have come across is the one presented here.

To answer these questions, this study will use a conceptual framework inspired by Bourdieu's studies into the practice of knowledge production in Academia. Bourdieu (1977) argues that one of the characteristics of identifying a coherent logic of practice is that it is shaped over time and transposable to different settings in which actors are engaged. Hence, this research will inductively attempt to understand the practice of the intelligence community as it is shaped by different experiences and deployments. After that, I will deductively apply and 'test' the identified practices in the presently unfolding Dutch contribution to MINUSMA. By doing so, this study aims to generate a comprehensive insight into the organizational dynamics of knowledge production. Moreover, the findings of this research will contribute to the academic debate of how organizations cope with the ambiguity of knowledge. Hence, the research question is formulated as follows.

RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the organizational dynamics of knowledge production of the Dutch intelligence component in MINUSMA in 2014?

- How is knowledge production *practiced* within the intelligence community?
- How is the practice of knowledge production manifested in the Dutch intelligence community's contribution to MINUSMA?

METHODOLOGY

This chapter will address the research process that generated the findings presented in the next chapter. It will do so by explaining how the research was designed to answer the formulated research questions. Subsequently, this chapter will address methods of data collection and -analysis; and will reflect on the quality procedures of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this study is to understand the organizational dynamics of knowledge production in the Dutch intelligence community. A review of the academic debate brought to the fore the notion of practice as an appropriate lens to understand such dynamics. The theoretical premise of this framework is that organizations produce knowledge according to socialized practices, as has been elaborated upon in the academic debate presented above. A useful case study to analyse such a practice was found in the Dutch intelligence community, as it is a highly rationalized organization that is increasingly dedicated to producing knowledge of complex social conflicts.

OPERATIONALIZATION

In adherence to the research question and the conceptual framework, throughout the research, the unit of analysis is the organizational practice of knowledge production. Based on the academic debate and the orientation of the research setting, the following conceptual framework has been developed.¹³ While elaborating on the design of this framework, the section will also directly present the way the key sensitizing concepts have been operationalized.

¹³ Although chronologically this framework is presented before the actual findings, it should be noted that the framework - and especially the sensitizing concepts - have gradually taken shape through an inductive method and corresponding steps of data analysis. As Grenfell (2008) argues: concepts developed, such as *field* and *habitus*, were rooted in the fundamental ethnographic question "who are they?" and "why are they" (2014: 19)

As was explained earlier, to fully grasp the complexity of the unit of analysis, the research was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the research served to answer the first sub-question:

How is knowledge production practiced within the intelligence community?

In the Netherlands

To answer this question, I set out to identify patterns in the organizational practice of knowledge production in the Dutch intelligence community. Practice is understood here as the result of the configurations of relations between actors occupying positions in a *field*. These configurations concern standardized procedures within the organization that determine how interaction between the actors take place. These formal configurations are theorized to structure the *habitus*, understood as sets of dispositions and internalized 'rules' of how to do social life (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). Such dispositions concern the way intelligence personnel develops a 'feel for the game' that makes them consider their practices as logical (Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). As such, emphasis is placed on the close interaction between field and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977).

Field

Firstly, the concept of field is used to conceptualize the organization as social space in which actors fill positions and share relations through organizational configurations. By focusing on these relations, I will try to identify how the organization conceives the interaction between the intelligence community as the producers of knowledge and the commander who has the authority to act upon that knowledge. Formally, these two fields separated, allegedly to guarantee the neutrality of intelligence towards decision-making. Hence I want to know how this regulated separation influences the practice of knowledge production. To do so, I also draw from Weber's (1976 see RP) rationalization theory, which hypothesizes that specialization, rules,

regulations and procedures gradually diminish the agency of the actors (Weber, 1958). Alvesson (1993) argued that such rationalization processes are typical for how knowledge-intensive firms treat knowledge as a neutral object that can be effectively *managed*. Is that how knowledge is treated in this case? If so, do actors remain fully constrained by such bureaucratic procedures?

Methodologically, Bourdieu (in Grenfell 2008: 221; 2014) has developed a stepwise approach to operationalize the concept of field that inspired the construction of the present research design. However, I have expanded and adjusted the approach to the particular focus of the research question on the organizational practice of knowledge production. This resulted in the following two interrelated steps. First, I will analyse the (allegedly neutral) position of the field of the intelligence community vis-a-vis the larger organization in which authority is situated (Grenfell, 2008: 221). I conduct this stage of the research through document analysis in which I seek to identify the formal positioning of different functions in the organizations. This means I will study the positions as 'hubs' in the intelligence chain, the arbitrary 'channels' through which knowledge flows and how it reaches the commander.

Next, I will dissect the "structure of relations between positions occupied by agents" in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 104-107 in Grenfell, 2008: 221). In this stage, I study accounts of how these relations are negotiated by analysing internal evaluations of previous missions and in-depth interviews. As such, I take a more subjective approach to understand how the subjects construct the relations and boundaries between the field of intelligence and the field of authority. Do they take for granted the arbitrary separation of intelligence from decision-making, or do they negotiate this boundary? If so, what strategies do they apply?

Habitus

Habitus is a concept that sensitizes this research to understand how the configurations of the field generate dispositions to the practice of knowledge

production within the intelligence community. The academic debate addressed a tendency for highly rationalized configurations in organizations to induce dispositions to approaching knowledge as a commodity, which can be collected, distributed and exploited. Through this process, then, the organization can be provided with 'valuable' predictions. Habitus is a concept developed by Bourdieu (1977) that considers the human being as having internalized and embodying certain informal "rules of the game" (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10). By conceptualizing the intelligence community in such a way, I investigate the rules as to how they determine what 'valuable knowledge' entails and more explicitly, how it can be produced.

Thus, centre stage in this examination is the relation such dispositions have with the configurations of the field, which is conceived as a dialectical relation "between objective structures and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized and which tend to reproduce them" (Bourdieu, 1977: 3 in Grenfell, 2014: 13). In other words, how does the structure of the organization mediate how knowledge is produced? As will be demonstrated, because authority is distributed through a hierarchical pyramid, the intelligence community has accustomed to this by *aggregating* all the information from the operational environment to present it to the commander on top of the pyramid. Such a tendency will show to have different effects on the practice of knowledge production. I analyse such tendencies from in-depth interviews, which I will triangulate with policy documents to determine their consistency.

Doxa

How do such organizational dynamics influence the actual production of knowledge by analysts? Constrained by their position in the organization and the orientation on *managing* knowledge, how do analysts perform *analysis*? In Bourdieu's case, the result of the academic practice he studied was the dominance of a positivist epistemology. As such, he refers to doxa, or

"apparently natural beliefs or opinions, which are in fact intimately linked to field and habitus." (Deer, 2008: 115). These presuppositions are argued to delineate the possible sets of knowledge. Deer argues that 'doxa' is more specifically used to account for actions and practice in traditional organizations where the near perfect *correspondence* between the social structures and the mental structures" (Deer, 2008:116, emphasis added). In other words, are the assumptions underlying knowledge production consistent with the practiced aggregation of knowledge? How is the way of analysing the conflict environment influenced by the expectations of the commander?

In this step, I limit myself to looking at 'presuppositions' to knowledge production. I operationalize this concept by looking at conceptual preconceived dichotomies and categories, and the epistemology applied to describe the conflict environment. As such, I study the patterns and categories by which they describe their understanding of the conflict environment – an approach inspired by that of Coffey & Atkinson (1996). Again, I triangulate by using both documents and in-depth interviews to study their consistency. Conceptually, I also triangulate from the patterns in the data that constitute the field and habitus to identify relationships between these three concepts. Ultimately, this will help making theoretical generalizations to how a focus on practice can help understand the organizational dynamics of knowledge production.

In Mali

After having inductively generated an understanding of the practice in chapter one, I will turn to a particular case in which the organization is operational: the Dutch intelligence contribution to the MINUSMA mission. Having identified different factors that constitute practice, I deductively apply these concepts to MINUSMA in order to answer the second sub-question:

How is the practice of knowledge production manifested in the Dutch intelligence community's contribution to MINUSMA?

Ultimately, an answer to this question would generate insight into how robust and transposable these practices are across the organization's operational deployments – particularly between those in Afghanistan and in Mali. As such, increasingly valid theoretical generalizations can be made because, as Bourdieu suggests, core properties of his concepts are that they are spatially and temporarily transposable.

However, there are quite a number of configurations and procedures that are different from what the Dutch intelligence community is used to in NATO-led missions. As they are in a largely civilian UN mission, how does this setting affect the practice of knowledge production? Bourdieu would suggest such a change of field from a NATO to a UN environment could cause friction, or "hysteresis" (Grenfell, 2014:25).

Hence, in this phase, I shall determine whether and how the organizational *practice* of knowledge production materializes and through what dynamics it affects the Dutch intelligence efforts in Mali. Methodologically I apply and slightly expand the operationalization of the conceptual framework of first chapter. To do so, data was collected through numerous informal talks, in-depth interviews and participant observations of 'intelligence meetings' at the Field Head Quarters (FHQ) of MINSUMA.

DATA COLLECTION

ACCESS

Before elaborating on the applied data-collection techniques, research within the intelligence community of a military organization requires one to address *access*. Firstly, because I did not have a full security clearance I was not able to access the actual intelligence products. In addition, I could only occasionally attend meetings and discussions at in which knowledge production took place. Most of it took place behind closed doors. This meant I had to focus my

attention more generically at the organizational dynamics of knowledge production - which fundamentally shaped the unit of analysis of this research.

Luckily, I was able to conduct both document analysis and in-depth interviews. Documents could be accessed that were appropriate to my unit of analysis because they included (1) internal evaluations of the role of intelligence in the larger mission, primarily based on Afghanistan and (2) prescriptive documents of how intelligence is to be executed, which are also used in instruction and training of intelligence personnel¹⁴. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with both intelligence personnel and several commanders. The purpose of studying both was to be able to analyse the relations and interaction between both fields. Not having security clearance also had a great impact on the quality procedures in the applied sampling, recruitment and data-collection techniques. These have to be kept in mind while reading this study and will be addressed throughout the next sections.

SAMPLING

Issues of access also highly affected the sampling methods. Therefore, I will address various sampling and recruitment procedures during the research phase during the phases of research in the Netherlands and in Mali here.

Netherlands

Regarding intelligence personnel in the Netherlands, my sampling method was purposive, as I sought to interview respondents that had experience in non-traditional intelligence. I also sampled purposively by distributing my sample across positions in intelligence chain: from analysts in the Fusion Cell¹⁵ up to the mission commander's intelligence staff and one actual

¹⁴ Int. Code: INTEL09, interview held with the author on 04-06-2014

¹⁵ The Fusion Cell is the unit that is part of the staff directly under the Mission Commander. It is tasked to aggregate all information from the decentralized units and intelligence cells to provide intelligence products to the commander.

commander¹⁶. However, as an outsider it was not self-evident who such analysts were and how to approach them. My direct co-workers at the DOPS intelligence department served as gatekeepers and were able to help me recruit interviewees, mostly through their network. This granted them the possibility to impose bias on my research by influencing the sampling process. As much as I could, I have tried to circumvent such potential for bias by applying a snowball sampling technique in addition. This means that after each interview, I consulted my interviewee on whether they knew other appropriate interviewees – eventually building my own network. Although the same bias can potentially surface through this technique, it would at least be distributed over my entire network of interviewee instead of than centred on my direct g gatekeepers.

MINUSMA

Within MINUSMA, both sampling and adherent recruitment were very precarious. Arrangements for the visit to Mali could only be arranged on very short notice with limited information on possibilities of access and recruitment of interviewees. Hence, I sought to snowball-sample and recruit interviewees with the purposive parameters that were inducted from my findings in the Netherlands. However, to a smaller extent I had to resort to convenience sampling, which had several effects on my data collection techniques. Most importantly, my gatekeepers could primarily grant me access to the Field Head Quarters, where only one Dutch intelligence officer worked. For that reason, I also included interviews with intelligence personnel that *could* be recruited at the research site, but are from other NATO-member states. I perceived this as considerably representative for my research population due to the highly synchronized procedures between

¹⁶ This meant that I interviewed personnel within the Military Intelligence and Security Service (MIVD) and the Directorate operations in The Hague, at the Civil-Military Co-ordination Command (CMI) and at the Joint Intelligence, Surveillance, Targeting, Acquisition, Reconnaissance Command (JISTARC) in 't Harde. Members of the intelligence chain generally all come from one of these units.

NATO states¹⁷. However, the reader should be aware that it could affect the internal validity of this research.

Only later were we able to interview analysts from the Dutch intelligence contingent who visited the FHQ from their camp far outside of the city of Bamako. In addition, we were able to conduct one interview at their campsite. Besides intelligence personnel, I was able to interview two senior staff members at the FHQ who are positioned directly under the force commander.

In addition to interviews, we were – in contrast with the setting in the Netherlands – allowed to attend three intelligence meetings at the FHQ. This technique had not been applied yet due to the many restrictions, but was highly appropriate to the unit of analysis because of the interaction taking place between intelligence personnel and between intelligence and the senior staff of the commander.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to classification of information, the interviewee was always responsible for guarding his own boundaries of discretion. I was often under the impression that interviewees were very conscious of this and often strategically navigated to answer my questions as best as they could. Besides applying an angle of research that avoids directly addressing more sensitive and restricted topics, I also focused strongly on internal reports and evaluations that are confidential, which enabled me to triangulate the findings from my interviews. As such, I was partially able to filter out situations in which an informant was avoiding a topic or stick to the readings of events as the Ministry of Defence externally published them. Several of these internal reports cited and quoted in this thesis are confidential. Therefore, the original source will not be stated. Unfortunately, there were no other alternatives to still be able to make use of this valuable information.

¹⁷ NATO has JOINT doctrines of which national doctrines are, to a large extent, derived.

I also made use of more informal conversations and interviews that were not recorded. Sometimes, I even did not take notes, because I was often under the impression that interviewees were carefully observing my note-taking carefully. As such conversations were often held together with the two other members of the research team, rigor in data collection was nevertheless safeguarded through researchers' triangulation; immediately after the interview we discussed the content of the interview and made and compared notes to avoid confirmation bias.

These reflexive research strategies are ethically legitimate because the content of this thesis is also screened by the Ministry of Defence to ensure the professional discretion of the subjects is not compromised. Anonymity is ensured by removing the names of the subjects and additionally, by generalizing the informants' positions in the organization to prevent their identities from being retrievable. In addition, I conducted interviews based on informed consent. I explained the topic of my research and evaluated each interview with the participant. In addition, I provided all participants with my contact details in case they had anything to add, ask or clarify. Lastly, professional discretion is safeguarded because this thesis has been screened by the Ministry of Defence to filter out classified details that might unexpectedly have been ventilated by interviewees. However, this screening procedure also compromises the autonomy of me as a researcher.

DATA ANALYSIS

Given the inductive nature of the first part of this research, and the more deductive approach to the second part, data analysis has been appropriated in adherence. Namely, through the *spiral of analysis* – a method that integrates collection, coding and analysis of data into a coherent research process. From the data collection as it is directed by the research question data was analysed and assessed through open coding. This involves identifying patterns and regularities in the data and identifying categories in it, which in turn constitute the first codes. These codes are still formulated in the subjects' own

use of language (Boeije, 2010). Next, the categories are identified that still need additional data, which introduced a next round of data collection. This additional set of data was analysed through the use of axial coding, which means that categories were specified and refined, and connections were sought between different categories. This resulted in a hierarchical structure of codes, including categories and subcategories (Boeije, 2010)

Based on this gradually refined structure of codes a more deductive approach to data collection was applied during the fieldwork in Mali. Final sets of data were selectively collected to understand the links between categories in more detail. Hence, the level of conceptual abstraction increased and the coding also became more selective to clarify concepts and understand better and how they could link to existing literature that might have not yet been included in the literature study previous to data collection. After selective coding was completed and the specific links between categories were better understood, a conceptual model was designed. This mind map served to construct a coherent image social reality represented in the data (Boeije, 2010). Throughout the spiral of analysis, analytic memos were written that support the identification of patterns in the data. These memos were written during the data collection itself, whenever ideas came up that might help to later interpret and code the data (Boeije, 2010).

Although these analytical procedures have helped to identify reoccurring *patterns* in the data and leave out anecdotes or experiences that were not supported by other sources, I do not claim that my findings are generalizable to the entire 'intelligence community'. If anything, I have experienced during my fieldwork that there is no 'one' intelligence community, let alone 'one' Ministry of Defence. Although - for the convenience of writing - I often refer to this community as a whole and I did spend six months studying it - the claims made are limited to my particular sample, as can be found in the appendix.

CHAPTER ONE: PRACTICE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

PYRAMID OF HIERARCHY

In accordance with Bourdieu & Wacquant, to understand the field the "objective positions occupied by agents or institutions" should be understood (1992: 104-105). Within the Dutch Military, intelligence is officially considered as separate from command and control. In the chain of command it is assumed that from the Chief of Defence¹⁸ down to the foot soldier, every respective sub-ordinate commander is to adhere to the commander's intent. As the Command & Control doctrine states, "this means that command relationships must be properly established and that there is a need for clear delineation between the various roles and responsibilities in the chain."¹⁹

In order for a commander to act, he is to go through a cyclical decision making process that also reserves a specific role for knowledge production. The commander needs to continuously analyze, plan, execute and assess his actions. If one commander would reach a decision, he is to inform the sub-ordinate commander who then goes through the same cycle. In order for the analysis phase to be optimally executed, a commander has an intelligence cell as part of his or her staff. The assumption is that the information provided by the intelligence staff can optimize the decision making process:

*"No information, no operation. Intelligence is the upshot of knowledge and understanding of the activities, capabilities and intentions of all (relevant) actors and factors. The military intelligence function provides as complete and up-to-date a picture of the situation as possible and is an essential condition for the ability of a military unit to function."*²⁰

¹⁸ In the Netherlands, the correct phrase for Chief of Staff is the Commandant der Strijdkrachten (CDS) - who is the highest ranking military officer in the defence hierarchy

¹⁹ MoD (2012). Joint Doctrine Publication 5. Command & Control.

²⁰ MoD (2012). Joint Doctrine Publication 5. Command and Control.

Hence, in the configurations of the field of decision-making, namely the chain of command has fixed positions for knowledge to be provided. Through the configured relationship of the intelligence cell and its commander, there is an arbitrary separation of knowledge from the positions that have the formal authority of decision making. Firstly, this arbitrary divide pre-supposes that there is no knowledge production taking place outside intelligence, as if knowledge is something that is sometimes 'called upon'. Secondly, it assumes that knowledge is neutral to decision-making, which will be elaborated on later.

Besides the configurations that determine that intelligence cells are responsible for providing knowledge for a single commander, these cells are also part of a larger network of knowledge production in the organization. Within nearly any Dutch military mission, there exists a central *fusion cell*, whose task it is to analyze information collected from all the local intelligence cells along the hierarchy. Subsequently, they are to disseminate their intelligence product to units in the field as well as the mission commander and his staff²¹. Hence, the configurations of the organization are organized in the shape of a pyramid. Collection takes place on the lowest level, analysis takes place another level up and the intelligence products are then presented to the commander.

Intelligence Collection Plan

Furthermore, the co-ordination of intelligence collection is articulated in an Intelligence Collection Plan (ICP). The plan implies that a question issued to a lower intelligence cell is divided up in small pieces of information that are required to answer this question. All these questions are then divided over the different intelligence units according to their specialties. To answer these questions, each unit formulates its *own* ICP. This operationalization process is

²¹ This network is predominantly hierarchical, but also includes many lateral connections between functions in the organizations. Moreover, it is extremely complex and the exact details of it are outside the focus of this research.

repeated until every single piece of data is collected and disseminated to answer the question of the commander on top of the pyramid. This pyramid results in an upward *aggregation* of knowledge, which will be discussed in further detail when discussing the habitus. Most important here is that the configurations in the organization are typical for a *commodification* of knowledge (Alvesson, 1993). The ICP is to put knowledge together as ontologically distinct pieces that are then distributed across the organization. Patriotta (2003) describes a similar process that she refers to a "managerial epistemology" (2003: 350).

Separation of organizational levels assumed

How can we better understand this hierarchical and specialized knowledge production process? A level of abstraction higher, it can be observed that the military organize their processes, including that of knowledge production, consistently in terms of three levels: the strategic, operational and tactical level. Throughout the fieldwork conducted in this research, intelligence matters were discussed in these terms. It can be considered a rationalized concept of the organization that coincides with the hierarchy in the organization: strategy determines operations – operations determine tactics.

Like in a pyramid, the lower the level the broader it becomes, which neatly fits in with the structure of command and control. At the same time, the military themselves have identified the close interaction between these levels: "Strategic mistakes may squander operational and tactical successes. By the same token, tactical and operational success cannot rescue a seriously flawed strategy. The tactical and operational levels in COIN may be compressed due to the protracted nature of the conflict and the complexity of the operational environment" (NATO COIN guidelines: 74). This suggests that the practices of knowledge production are arbitrarily divided over and separated by these levels, while the environment in which the military operate is not consistent with this divide. Hence, these configurations serve to preserve a practice of continuous collation and aggregation in order to cross

these boundaries, which is inconsistent with the concept of non-traditional intelligence, in which *local* dynamics are deemed crucial.

AMBIGUOUS NEUTRALITY

*"Information that comes is analysed on the basis of several techniques. Then, something comes out of that: a product. Based on the information contained in that product it said that if you want to go one way around, these will be the consequences; If you decide to go the other way around, then these will be the consequences. And then most of the intelligence officers tell the commander 'good luck'. Because the commander takes the decision, not the intelligence officer."*²²

As is demonstrated above, the military seem to organize intelligence as if it is neutral and can be separated from the actual decision making process. To illustrate, a commonly heard expression in the intelligence community says: "intelligence is there to predict the weather, and the commander decides whether he should bring an umbrella."²³ However, in the practice of intelligence, this kind of neutrality of knowledge production is rather ambiguous and intensively negotiated. Several informants say they value their neutrality towards command, but at the same time claim that they are required by the commander to infer and provide potential courses of action ("*handelingsperspectief*") from the knowledge that they provide.²⁴

Indeed, they consciously seek to influence decision making because they want positive feedback on their products. A senior analyst from the *Military Intelligence- and Security Service* (MIVD) made clear that intelligence is increasingly aiming to engage with decision-making by "presenting and advancing concrete policy options."²⁵ So although the objective neutrality is identified as a formal configuration of the relationship between the field of

²² Int. Code: INTEL09, interview held with the author on 04-06-2014

²³ Informal conversation by the author with intelligence officer

²⁴ Int. Code: INTEL15, interview held with the author on 18-06-2014

²⁵ Int. Code: INTEL10, interview held with the author on 05-06-2014

authority and the field of knowledge, the accounts of informants generally indicate that a much thinner line exists. For example, one informant claimed that he does not formulate specific policy advice, but that "in the interpretation we formulate of events we already convey certain courses of actions that logically follow from our analysis."²⁶

A last aspect that problematizes the notion of neutrality is that some intelligence officers say that they often formulate the questions they are to answer autonomously, instead of receiving them from the commander. What are officially named the Commander's Intelligence Requirements (CIRs), are claimed to entail a "lacking guidance from commanders."²⁷ Hence, as analysts are sometimes able to autonomously formulate the question and convey policy implications in an intelligence product, the boundary between the fields of command and knowledge is constantly crossed. The next chapter will demonstrate that this negotiation is also manifesting itself within the MINUSMA mission, where several intelligence cells compete over influence on decision-making.

Rotations

Another configuration that strongly influences the alleged neutrality of knowledge production is that the Dutch military are only deployed for four to six months. After this period, rotation takes place and many informants problematized this process. A questionnaire held among intelligence officers active in Afghanistan reports that they found it very hard to build up relations with the local population and their respective leaders, because the latter was well aware they would be gone soon. In of most interviewees, this highly affected the information position they were able to build up and generate knowledge through.²⁸ According to the same report, the ME analysis cell often rotated in starting with an instant knowledge deficit in comparison

²⁶ Int. Code: INTEL06, interview held with the author on 02-06-2014

²⁷ MoD (2010d). Classified document.

²⁸ MoD (2009). Classified document.

with the already present lower units. Reportedly, this deficit was hardly compensated over the course of their deployment. It was supposedly different when lower units started with such a deficit when rotating in: "This deficit was easier caught up with by lower unit than by the staff, especially the ME cell²⁹, particularly as a result of the information they gathered [the lower units] during patrols and operations."³⁰

As a Fusion Cell analyst states, the duration of deployment had an instant effect on the acquisition of (local) knowledge: "You yourself are there for half a year, then when there is a new local police chief appointed, by the time you have an idea of where he is actually coming from, you are at the end of your deployment."³¹ Formally, such a problem should be avoided through the preparation of the staff before deployment and by keeping ICP's in tact. Nonetheless, according to an analyst, this did not work as planned: "Every rotation plans its own training and preparation, while there already is an assignment. So new emphases emerge and a different ICP is produced, including new requirements."³² Hence, the aspect of rotations and the role of intelligence therein indicate that knowledge is considered something external to social interaction, assuming it is a resource that can be stored and distributed at will. In conclusion, the process of knowledge production is considered as independent from the people involved in it, who are considered replaceable. Paradoxically, this assumption also creates space for analysts to shape their own ICP's.

Career incentives commanders

Besides the direct influence that the rotation policy has on the practice of knowledge production, it also problematizes the relation between the field of command and the field of knowledge within a military operation. Mostly off

²⁹ A Mission Environment (ME) Cell is generally the same as the All Source Intelligence Cell, I will consistently refer to both as Fusion Cell.

³⁰ MoD (2009). Classified document.

³¹ Int. Code: INTEL08, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

³² Ibid.

the record, several analysts have expressed their view on the formulation of mission objectives by the commanders as being influenced more by their chances of a promotion than the long-term effectiveness of the mission. According to these informants, commanders seek to establish at least one kinetic victory during their rotation in order to add that to their list.³³

Whether true or not, these accounts suggests that the intelligence personnel implicitly take a contentious stance towards the commander. This can be demonstrated by an account from a senior analyst directly connected to the mission commander in one of the Uruzgan rotations, the focus on the long term "was sometimes almost experienced as 'nagging' (*doorzeuren*): 'There you have the intel again with his root causes'³⁴. Hence, the tension between these two organizational fields has direct impact on the knowledge production process, because it affects the mutual expectations between the commander and intelligence personnel. A later section "Habitus" will address certain dispositions to the practice of intelligence, where we will see that these expectations impose informal rules on what knowledge is deemed valuable to the organization.

Domestic political layer

The influence of formal authority on the knowledge production process reaches even than the mission commander. Several interviewees claim that the domestic political dynamics often determined the relevance of knowledge. Because the political mission objectives are often focused on international recognition and electoral pressure, the real implications of intelligence products are not experienced as getting the recognition they should, because

³³ This was repeatedly mentioned in informal conversations with intelligence staff and other military personnel

³⁴ Interview Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014

"as long as everybody says the 3-D approach³⁵ is going well, why would we be discussing whether the situation in Uruzgan is really improving?"³⁶

Some informants experienced it as difficult to take the local environment as a point of departure because it was sometimes contradicting political imperatives. This suggests that even if the commander is really open what analysts build up as knowledge of the environment, "he sometimes can't [use it], because he has political constraints (*vangrails*)."³⁷ An analyst that works directly under the political level shares this view: "Intelligence consumers often perform cherry-picking of information, especially on the political level this is very value-based, there is always a political layer."³⁸ Although these accounts are merely subjective claims that do not bare any evidence concerning the motives of politicians, they do demonstrate that the close interaction between analysts and their 'customers'. This organizational interaction could induce them to adjust their products so that it becomes something 'useful', rather than 'neutral'. As such, political dynamics are an aspect to the practice of knowledge production in intelligence, a dynamic that will also be identified in the case study of MINUSMA.

CONCLUSION

This section demonstrated that there are two fundamental implications of the configurations of organizational fields such as they are: the *management* of knowledge and the tension between knowledge and formal authority.

The highly rationalized institutional relations structure a very rationalized managerial practice of knowledge production. The "institutional life", as DiMaggio & Powell call it, adherently through knowledge through such management practice (1991: 64). The result of this is that intelligence is arbitrarily separated from command. This configuration served to legitimate

³⁵ 3D stands for diplomacy, development and defence and implies a comprehensive approach in which these efforts are combined

³⁶ Int. Code: INTEL07, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

³⁷ Int. Code: INTEL07, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

³⁸ Int. Code: INTEL10, interview held with the author on 05-06-2014

the knowledge produced by the intelligence community. Davies (2004) argues that such a separation serves to divert a threat of accountability from analysts, allowing them to do their job. What Davies did not point out is that the diffusion of accountability can work both ways: because knowledge is separated from command, accountability for the commander's decisions can also be slightly diverted. For example, if the commander would neutrally reach a 'bad' decision in accordance with the intelligence provided, he can later claim that he was 'ill-informed.'

In contrast with the formal configurations of separated fields, from the data emerged an image of *colliding* fields with negotiated boundaries. This seems to be an indirectly induced dynamic that is subtly played out below the surface. Namely, the commander seems to impose influence on knowledge and at the same time, the knowledge worker attempts to exercise power – conveyed by his knowledge products. The intelligence community thus seems to implicitly contend the authority of command. Despite the fact that interviewees themselves perceive the arbitrary partition as legitimate, they still try to negotiate it. They do so by producing knowledge with specific policy implications. Space to do so emerges in particular due to the short rotations and the inherent changes of Intelligence Collection Plans (ICP).

Such negotiation of boundaries is succinctly explained by Bourdieu (1988): "Struggles for the imposition of the principle of legitimate hierarchization do in fact cause a dividing-line between those who belong and those who do not to be constantly discussed and disputed, therefore shifting and fluctuating, at every moment and above all according to the moment" (Bourdieu, 1988: 77 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008).

A final relation that further problematizes the proclaimed neutrality of knowledge production is that is perceived to be mediated strongly by the imperatives of the mission formulated in the domestic political field. This is an indication that analysts have incentives to appropriate their products to what they perceive is in political audience's interest. Such adjustments

analysts make in responses to the structural relations will be further explored in the next section on the habitus.

HABITUS

From both interviews and observations, a tendency within the practice of knowledge production became apparent that is directly related to the configurations of the field. Namely, the hierarchical configuration of authority is reflected in the relations through which knowledge can be applied in decision making. In other words, the central position of the commander requires the decentralised level to aggregate its knowledge, as a commodity, towards the peripheral centre of formal authority – the commander.

From the patterns in the data, it seems that this configuration induces certain practices that are taken for granted due to the continuous aggregation of knowledge that needs to be performed. This section will illuminate these taken-for-granted practices and conceptualize them as constitutive of a habitus. There are many definitions and even more applications of habitus used within the social sciences, but one in particular seems accurate in the light of the following findings. It considers Habitus as the way "society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or *trained* capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them." (Wacquant, 2005: 316. Emphasis added). A prime illustration of such a trained 'feel for the game' of what decision-makers require from analysts reads:

"(...) As an intelligence officer you need to know very well what the commander wants to achieve, which effect he wants to achieve and for which decision he needs this information. That separates a good intelligence officer from the rest. That he has a feeling for what the commander wants to achieve. Always in the mindset (geest) of the

commander – what kind of information he needs, when to present it and in which format."³⁹

AGGREGATION

What are the trained capacities and structured propensities to produce knowledge within the intelligence community? The most important propensity of knowledge production revolves around the accepted practice to aggregate knowledge 'collected' by peripheral units towards the 'Fusion Cell' in the centre - directly connected to the mission commander.⁴⁰ The internal logic behind this is explained by the NATO Counterinsurgency doctrine: "Accurate and actionable intelligence is key to defeating an insurgency. An efficient HN intelligence architecture must be developed and accessible. Ideally, all intelligence organizations and agencies should be unified, integrated and centralised for information management, and decentralised for information gathering."⁴¹ This management process is assumed to be optimally facilitated by an adequate ICT support system, which is perceived as pivotal because of the "(...) large quantity of information and intelligence on the one hand, and the complexity of actors and processes on the other."⁴²

Hence, despite the recognized complexity of the operational environment, it is assumed that as long as knowledge – treated as a *resource* – is effectively channelled and disseminated, adequate knowledge will surface. In other words, if the availability of information is guaranteed, a "(...) comprehensive understanding of complex environments" can be provided for the commander.⁴³ An internal evaluation of the intelligence component within the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) is quite reflexive of this process,

³⁹ Int. Code: INTEL09, interview held with the author on 04-06-2014

⁴⁰ The exact composition of command varies between missions, because nearly every mission is multi-national. In addition, the position of the upper commander depends on whether the Netherlands has a geographic responsibility, which was the case in Mali, but not in Kunduz or Mali. Hence, what is meant by mission commander is the highest ranking Dutch officer in the mission environment.

⁴¹ NATO (2010a). NATO Counterinsurgency Operational Guidelines

⁴² MoD (2010c). Classified Document.

⁴³ NATO (2010b). Knowledge Management Development Handbook.

suggesting that because of the large flows of information they sometimes "fail to see the trees behind the forest (*door de bomen het bos niet meer zien*)."⁴⁴

As such, it seems that there is an organizational disposition to treat knowledge as a manageable commodity, but at the same time there is the experience that this type of knowledge management can increase ambiguity. In the case study of MINUSMA, it will be demonstrated how the fusion concept affects the policy ambition of using local knowledge in decision-making. The next section will address important propensities to knowledge production that are argued to be induced by the aggregation process.

PREDICTABILITY

"I was standing outside with the general having a chat. I was looking at the mountains and said 'too bad, isn't it?' The general asked what I meant and I said: 'If there were snow now, in January, that means that around April it would begin to melt. The rivers would run full, lands could be irrigated and the farmers would have enough to eat, which would make their children happy and friendly. That would make them less keen on picking up arms or cultivating poppy.' That is predictable, it is simply a matter of extrapolating from what you observe ⁴⁵.

According to the Handbook analysis used within Dutch intelligence, part of the purpose of analysis is to provide a prognosis so that "the planning and decision making level can take decisions and anticipate the future based on provided intelligence products."⁴⁶ The account of the snowfall illustrates a disposition towards attempting to provide estimates, prognoses and predictions that forms a recurring pattern in the data. One interviewee claims that this requirement – or expectation – causes analysts to experience pressure: "You see many intelligence people being cautious with their

⁴⁴ MoD (2010d). Classified document.

⁴⁵ Int. Code: INTEL09, interview held with the author on 04-06-2014

⁴⁶ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse

assessments. For that reason, you see many 'it can freeze, it can thaw' (*het kan vriezen, het kan dooien*) reports. They do not dare to make hard statements because they are afraid they are mistaken, but that is useless to the commander"⁴⁷

According to another informant, if you do provide a prognosis, this is highly welcome: "Then the commander says, 'genius!' I understand it is an estimate - nobody has a crystal bowl. But it sounds plausible, is in line with our situational awareness and I can plan on this."⁴⁸. Although this account cannot be considered representative of actual motivation of the commander, it does account for the perception among analysts of what a valuable product is. As such, an intelligence officer has a tendency to produce knowledge that the commander can *use*. In other words, the knowledge worker is to "tell the commander how to *push the right buttons*"⁴⁹ (emphasis added). Again this constructs an interaction between knowledge and decision-making - which in this case, encourages analysts to make predictive statements they do not feel entirely comfortable with.

This disposition towards making predictions corresponds with a positivist epistemology (Fay, 1996; Hollis) that is induced by the organizational configurations of the field - and more specifically, to the field of authority (Bourdieu, year, or rather Frenell). More indications of such an epistemology are identified when the assumptions concerning causality are addressed in the section on Doxa.

TIMELINESS

Because of the complex and dynamic nature of most military operations, timeliness of information is considered of crucial importance. As an interviewed commander aptly phrased it: "We are very structured and are able to establish a course of action on very short notice. Whether it is the right one, time will tell, that does not matter. Like firemen, we sometimes have to

⁴⁷ Int. Code INTEL04, Interview held with the author on 09-05-2014

⁴⁸ Int. Code: INTEL07, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

⁴⁹ Int. Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014

adapt during the execution"⁵⁰. Therefore, knowledge production often needs to be "quick and dirty"⁵¹. However, this logic has its effect on intelligence:

*"I think some commanders do not understand that if you ask me, 'here is a neighbourhood, I want to know within a day who are the bad guys, who are the good guys, why these guys bad, who are they working with, why are they able to, where do they get their resources from? What does the local population think of that?'. All questions they ask, but do not realize how hard it is, how much sensors and time are required [to answer these questions, red]."*⁵²

This account indicates that this analyst experiences some of his assignments as unrealistic. On a more abstract level, it indicates that the feasibility of certain questions – or rather, lack thereof – is perceived fundamentally different by the intelligence community in comparison with the commander. However, the commander outranks the analyst and the time-pressure imposed is largely accepted.

Time-pressure can have an impact on the social process of intelligence. Johnston (2005) conducted ethnographic research into US intelligence agencies, and identified socialization processes amongst groups of analysts, such as confirmation bias and group-think. A similar organizational dynamic was commonly mentioned by informants and is plausibly a result of such time-pressure. For example, when asked whether people often disagree with each other, a senior analyst says: "yes, and then I look at the time and make a judgement call: If there is no time left we vote. If there's no majority, I give the final call. For specialists and academics that sucks, but you can take as much time as you want, but next week it's of no use anymore."⁵³ The comparison made between intelligence and academia in terms of time pressure also

⁵⁰ Int. Code: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

⁵¹ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

⁵² Int. Code: INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014

⁵³ Int. Code: INTEL07, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

suggests that there is a difference between their respective habituses: there are different "rules of the game" (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10).

CONCISENESS

Another important rule of the game concerns the *reporting* of knowledge by the analyst. The Handbook Analysis prescribes that reports should present the bottom line up front: "What is most important comes first, so that the core of the message does not disappear between the lines. In a world in which we have less and less time and are often confronted with more and more information – we have to make conscious decisions on what is and what is not interesting."⁵⁴ In the same regard, there seems to be tension between the commander and the analyst: "If you have an *ahoea* marine commander that was until recently used to receiving highly kinetic things to do – he wants a short briefing and then switch to SWOT [Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, red.] right away."⁵⁵ (Emphasis added).

This tension also partially revolves around the dichotomy between kinetic and non-kinetic intelligence. In terms of intelligence – this is commonly associated with respectively traditional versus non-traditional knowledge (Flynn, 2010). Some analysts have expressed that they feel there is still a strongly traditional 'kinetic' mindset to intelligence among commanders. However, non-traditional, also referred to as non-kinetic intelligence, is earning increasing merit and is also claimed to take centre stage in the intelligence efforts in MINUSMA. However, it seems that knowledge still has to be produced according to non-traditional rules.

The necessity of being concise also coincides with the large quantities of information that have to be dealt with. Hence, aggregation induces a

⁵⁴ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse

⁵⁵ "*Ahoeha*" is an expression I have interpreted as a human trait of simplistically acting before thinking.

⁵⁶ Int. Code: INTEL07, interview held with the author on 03-06-2014

disposition among analysts to be very concise. It adds to the commonly shared notion that in order for the mission commander to lead, intelligence has to be conducted 'quick and dirty'. This strongly contradicts the carefully rationalized and specialized knowledge management as attempted by the organization to ensure that good knowledge surfaces. Thus, one could argue that the emphasis on knowledge management shows similarities with what Alvesson calls "myths of technocracy" to cope with the ambiguity of the social dynamics that are to be depicted (1993:999).

CLASSIFICATION

Intelligence connotes with espionage and secrecy, which the Dutch intelligence community does not deem fit for the operational imperatives of non-traditional intelligence. From the viewpoint of the latter, the military claim they try to increase the *sharing* of knowledge.⁵⁷ Supposedly, sharing with different nations, (civil) organizations and military units is deemed increasingly important. As an internal evaluation of TFU states, a shift should be made "from need to know to need to share."⁵⁸ However, internal reports claim that this was not achieved during the mission. These reports identify two causes for that.

Firstly, "intelligence stovepipes" emerged between intelligence units that, due to different ranks, had different levels of security clearances.⁵⁹ As a result, the Fusion cell connected to the commander and his staff was perceived as overly closed.⁶⁰ Allegedly, the fusion cell was claiming they had to do so out of Operational Security, to prevent national secrets from falling into the hands of adversaries.⁶¹ Secondly, the classification of information undermined the frequency with which sharing with civilian actors took place. One analyst explains that in conducting increasingly non-traditional

⁵⁷ MoD, [n.d.]. Intelligence Knowledge Charts

⁵⁸ TNO (2010). Classified document

⁵⁹ MoD, [n.d.]. Intelligence Knowledge Charts

⁶⁰ TNO (2010). Classified document.

⁶¹ OPSEC, operational security, is a military term that refers to the security concerns of (in this case intelligence) operations.

intelligence, he became more dependent of the information from NGOs and academics working in the field. However, he says, "If you ask them for something you also have to give something back – and there, of course, you encounter some difficulties because we have all sorts of classified products that we can't simply hand over to an NGO."⁶²

Interestingly, a TFU evaluation states that classification particularly caused lower units active on the ground not to be able to use the knowledge that combined at the level of the fusion cell. Note this *local* is where – according to the report – the knowledge could be applied most effectively. The report also suggests that in the absence of such non-traditional intelligence (often provided by civil organizations), units directed their intelligence efforts more at the "Red Picture (Taliban/Insurgents)" – a focus that has allegedly had many unintended consequences on the effectiveness of the operation⁶³. The classification of knowledge demonstrates not only that the production of knowledge was not as neutral and self-evident as the management perspective suggests; it also had inadvertent effects in the eyes of many analysts⁶⁴.

During the field work at the Ministry of Defence I was under the impression that the level of classification is often assumed to correspond with the level of significance assigned to that information. In Mali, a senior staff member specifically said that he values classified information over open source information.⁶⁵ The preoccupation with classifying information will appear to impede on the organization's imperative to acquire local knowledge for non-traditional intelligence.

On a final note, it should be mentioned that while the intelligence community seems to be ingrained to these practices, they are also reflective of

⁶² Interview Code INTEL04, Interview held with the author on 09-05-2014

⁶³ MoD, (2010d). Classified document.

⁶⁴ Those consulted as part of the evaluation research and several of my informants perceived the classification as counterproductive.

⁶⁵ Informal conversation of senior staff member with the author

it. These findings suggest that even classification, despite its symbolic roots in and connotations with espionage - is debated through a high degree of reflexivity among most informants.

CONCLUSION

This section sought to understand the organizational dispositions - or "rules of the game" - of knowledge production in the intelligence community (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10). Aggregation, as a form of knowledge management, seems to be based on the assumption that knowledge is a tangible and concrete object, which turned out to be problematized by reflections of several interviewees. Due to the configurations of aggregation depicted in the previous section, the intelligence community has developed "trained capacities and structural propensities" to continuously compromise the to adjust their practices by being concise, provide predictions and doing it quick and concise (Wacquant, 2005: 316). As such, it is demonstrated how the field "structure[s] the habitus" (Bourdieu, 1988b: 784 in Everett, 2002: 65).

In addition, the evidence presented problematizes the assumption that, in a complex environment, the management of knowledge can *guarantee* that the commander can base his decisions on objective knowledge. As stated earlier, Alvesson (1993) would likely refer to this process as constructing a false sense of objectivity when facing ambiguity and uncertainty. Accurate or not, Di Maggio's (1983) idea of the inadvertent and irreversible consequences of the rationalization of practice is suggested in this analysis of the organizational habitus. In other words, as the section on field demonstrated how the knowledge production process has been rationally institutionalized, this sections shows how that, in turn, seems to cause the analysts I have studied to adjust their practice of knowledge production to fit these organizational schemes.

However, it should be noted that the reflexivity of many actors also suggests that *transformation* of these structures of the habitus is possible.

Interestingly, Foucault, who is similarly interested in the structuring principles of human behaviour, has been critiqued for this lack of attention to such a transformational capacity (Foucault in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008). It requires a closer look at a discussion of Bourdieu's abstract concept of Habitus to comprehend this. Habitus has been defined as a "durably inculcated system of structured, structuring dispositions" (Bourdieu, 1990: 52), which is also quite a deterministic point of departure (Everett, 2002). Indeed, the findings presented above indicate that the 'way how to do' intelligence is internalized by analysts, but the idea that it reflects "the social inscribed in the body" is not supported (Bourdieu, 1962: 111).

Rather, it represents the habitus as an organizational "space of possibles", with "regulated *improvisations*" (Emirbrayer & Johnson, 2008:16; Bourdieu, 1977:278 in Emirbayer, 2008:16, Emphasis added). Hence, these findings also reflect dispositions to *strategize* the practice of knowledge production in particular ways. If anything, the dispositions identified from the present findings are quite transparent to the actors themselves, which partially challenges conceptualization of Habitus by Bourdieu (Everett, 2002). However, the structures of organizational schemes and "rules of the game" still appear to weigh heavy on the behaviour of those interviewed and they do not seem to simply defy it (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10). However, through their reflexivity of their practice they seem to be quite able to articulate these dispositions.

How these organizational dynamics influence the presuppositions to the actual production of knowledge is further below the surface. Therefore, the next section will study the presuppositions to how the concepts of how the configurations and dispositions to practice affect the intelligence personnel in their analysis of the conflict environment.

DOXA

The first sections of this chapter elaborated on the generative relation between the configurations of the organization and the second section addressed how

these configurations mediated the dispositions to knowledge production. This section will dissect the presuppositions to the analyses of the conflict environment by the intelligence community. I will first demonstrate that positivist assumptions underlie the way analyses are performed. Second, I will address several significant presupposed categories by which the intelligence community makes sense of the ambiguities of complex conflict environments.

To analyse these presuppositions, I draw from the idea of *doxa*, which Bourdieu conceptualized as "a set of fundamental beliefs which does not even need to be asserted in the form of an explicit self-conscious dogma" (Bourdieu, 200:16 in Deer, 2008:115). I will thus address categories and beliefs concerning the conflict environment that are taken for granted. Most importantly, I will identify the relations between these internalized assumptions and the practices that were addressed earlier. In Bourdieu's writings on the practice of knowledge production in academia, *dogma* have been studied to depict the relationship between the academic field and its habitus on the one hand, and its dominant epistemology on the other (Bourdieu, 1991). In other words, how do our social structures influence the way we think?

EPISTEMOLOGY

There are several implications the rationalization of knowledge production has on the knowledge production in the intelligence community. Most importantly, a positivist epistemology seems to have developed its self in accordance with the commanders' requirement of *predictability* imposed on the intelligence community, as was addressed earlier. The resulting dominant epistemology can be considered a positivist, in which causal relations are attempted to be dissected, hypotheses are formulated and tested, deductive logic is instructed and quantitative evidence is valued (Fay, 1996; Hollis, 1994). A succinct illustration hereof is brought forward by the Handbook Analysis, quoting the CIA: "Analysis involves breaking down problems into

constituent parts, such as causes and affects, and using logical operations to identify and test hypotheses for the purpose of explanation and prediction."⁶⁶

As has been stated earlier, quantitative measurement seems to be valued and ambitioned: "As the quantity of analysed intelligence increases over a certain theme or in terms of the behaviour of people connected to their possible intensions, we also see an increase of theoretical modelling and quantification of human intensions en spatial behaviour."⁶⁷ As an illustration of the development of ICT, an interviewed instructor of intelligence highlights the potential of quantitative methods to analyse social media:

"By certain words that are used (...) you could measure sentiments. There are tools for that, by which twitter, Facebook and YouTube are analysed. There is even scientists that claim they can predict based on that whether revolutions will occur."⁶⁸ One informant seemed to be quite optimistic about the merits of quantitative measurement: "[The] minimum wage, for example, was 50 cents a day. With that you can predict the behaviour of a family and how it can be influenced. If so many people have so little to spend, they are susceptible to anything that improves their position. Macro-digits say a lot about a single family"⁶⁹

Interestingly, there is a recurring pattern of analysing arguably complex dynamics, such as the perceptions of the local population towards the intervention force, in terms of quantitative measurement: "[hypotheses] should be tested (*afgeschoten*) one by one based on indicators that are measureable. You have to be able to measure it. If you say that a [populous] target audience is influenced by local politics, (...) you formulate a lot of

⁶⁶ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse

⁶⁷ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse

⁶⁸ Interview Code INTEL04, Interview held with the author on 09-05-2014.

⁶⁹ Interview Code INTEL02, Interview held with the author on 07-05-2014.

indicators based on hypotheses (...), if you cannot measure it, it is very weak."⁷⁰

When the same interviewee was asked what he did when something could not be quantitatively measured, he responded: "If you cannot confirm or dismiss an hypothesis, you have to drop it."⁷¹ He later suggested an alternative solution: "Segment the target audience, unravel it to attain oversight on it. Break it down, and then you can predict it. Take the Schilderswijk⁷², you can easily make predictions of that [neighbourhood] (...), for example men above 65, the sit on crates of beer, you can tell what they do if I do this, or what if do that. It is not a fully satisfactory (*zaligmakende*) method, but it does help."⁷³ (Emphasis added). Although not all respondents were that optimistic about it, both in the doctrines and handbooks, as well as in recurring accounts from interviewees, the method of hypothesis-testing seems to be taken for granted.⁷⁴

BREAKING A SOCIETY IN PIECES

The widely used categorization to describe and dissect the operational environment in non-traditional intelligence is by dividing it "into six theoretically discrete environments: Political, human, physical, security, information and economic."⁷⁵ (Emphasis added). These categories are not theoretically specified, but rather generally suggest that "[within these] conditions, instability and a resulting insurgency can take place and may subsequently flourish"⁷⁶, a statement that hardly has any identifiable theoretical or empirical premises.

⁷⁰ Interview Code INTEL02, Interview held with the author on 07-05-2014.

⁷¹ Interview Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014.

⁷² The *Schilderswijk* is an urban neighbourhood in Den Haag, The Netherlands.

⁷³ Interview Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014.

⁷⁴ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: *Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse*; MoD (2006). Leidraad Inlichtingen.

⁷⁵ MoD (2010a). Inlichtingenpublicatie: Operationeel Concept Inlichtingen Landoptreden.

⁷⁶ MoD (1998). Doctrine Landmacht Gevechtsoperaties.

These layers are often used to describe armed groups. As the NATO counterinsurgency doctrine describes: "Both insurgents and counterinsurgents employ varied tactics and methods. These include political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure (PMESII) activities (ways), in an attempt to reach a favourable outcome (ends) and within the resources available, including (...) time."⁷⁷ In Mali, a Dutch intelligence officer presented me a 'comprehensive assessment'. While elaborating on the report the analyst said they had found it "hard to deal with the ambiguity of the groups' strategies, unsure of whether they acted out of criminal or ideological motivations."⁷⁸ The analyst continued to say that they dealt with this by "following all the PMESII layers."⁷⁹ This meant they had mapped the out the capacities of these armed group in that way. As such, these categories provide a way to face the confronted ambiguity of the conflict environment. Although the division of categories supports the analysts to keep in mind other factors besides the military factor (the M in PMESII), there was no further operationalization found of these concepts.⁸⁰

INTELLIGENCE PLATES

Similar to the use of layers is the use of plates. Both in interviews and in doctrines and reports, the intelligence community often refers to a number of plates. Each plate resembles an aspect they deem relevant in an operational environment. The brown plate refers to 'weather and terrain', the red plate to 'enemy and threat', the blue plate to 'own units' and the green plate to 'units of the host government'. Interestingly, the white plate refers to civilian actors, such as NGOs, IOs and the local population. In an internal evaluation of the use of intelligence in decision-making, both intelligence staff and commanders reflect on the role of intelligence in the TFU-mission in terms of

⁷⁷ NATO (2010) Counterinsurgency guidelines

⁷⁸ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Information retrieved from Int. Code: INTEL16, interview held with the author on 19-06-2014.

these plates.⁸¹ Because of the categorical use of these plates, the NGOs and the local population are conceptually combined as non-enemies. Not only does that imply large generalizations that might compromise the specificity of their analyses, it also suspects that there is tendency to superficially separate the enemy from the local population. Two groups that, according to several respondents, the MoD has found to be very hard to distinguish and define during the deployment in Afghanistan.⁸²

Lastly, the division between these plates was bureaucratically implemented by assigning single cells to perform analyses of single plates. An organizational logic that, according to an internal report, often meant that the client (commanders) themselves had to integrate this into a comprehensive understanding of the mission environment⁸³ – an aggregation process that relates back to the organizational dynamics that were scrutinized earlier in this chapter.

CAUSALITY: SYSTEM OF SYSTEMS

Both the view of layers and of plates are integrated into a System of Systems analysis (SoSA) aimed at "analysing the internal relations between the features of an analytical problem." As the Analysis Handbook states: "one first seeks to identify the primary components of a problem. Next, one attempts to interpret these in terms of their internal interaction, causal relations and consequent effects on the larger integral whole."⁸⁴ This holistic approach, at least on paper, does recognize the complexities faced in an operational environment. At the same time, the function of the approach is "to assess strengths, weaknesses, vulnerabilities of the systems."⁸⁵ As such, the system is *justified* because of its presumed *utility*. Throughout the different doctrines and handbooks, the system of systems is portrayed as able to offer concrete

⁸¹ TNO (2010). Classified document.

⁸² Interview Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014.

⁸³ TNO (2010). Classified document

⁸⁴ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse

⁸⁵ NATO (2010b). Knowledge Development Handbook

ways to *influence* the system by providing practically applicable SWOT analyses.⁸⁶ – as the following paragraph will illustrate.

OTHER ASSUMPTIONS

Tribal structures

A prime example of how systems are analysed and disentangled comes from the focus on tribal structures, which has substantive currency within non-traditional intelligence. To illustrate:

*"An individual cannot survive without a group. The group protects the individual and the individual merges into the group. Often it is direct family or a tribe to which one belongs. One is therefore also obliged to help each other and loyalty, promises and human relations are important in this society, along with pride and tribal honour. These values we do not directly recognize (anymore) in the West and therefore they earn our respect."*⁸⁷

This account is an example of a comparison of our culture to that of the Afghans in terms of collectiveness and groupness, something that seems to resonate well among the military as a central framework to understand different social dynamics. For example, in the NATO counterinsurgency doctrine, cultural structures in foreign operational environment are conceived as "the key-leader culture is important to and can bring together culture, education, history, religion and political beliefs. Societies which, at face value, appear less developed are very likely to have highly complex societal structures where role and position are reinforced from the very lowest family level to the highest tribal or clan level."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ MoD (2010b). Handboek Analyse: *Theorievorming en methodologie inlichtingenanalyse*, Knowledge Development Handbook, Doctrine inlichtingen

⁸⁷ MoD [n.d.]. Counterinsurgency Review.

⁸⁸ NATO (2010a). NATO Counterinsurgency Operational Guidelines

A subject-matter expert on Afghanistan accompanied and advised the Dutch TFU during two rotations. His account also suggests a tendency existed among the intelligence community in Afghanistan to concentrate on tribal structures: "There seems to be a Western reflex to emphasize tribal structures. However, although tribes might have been important for younger Afghans – that is much less the case among older people, who lived under Soviet occupation and the subsequent revolution. This generation got very much mixed up and went to school together. The tribal differences were not that significant."⁸⁹ He also emphasised the ambiguity of such factors that are claimed to constitute Afghan identity: "Identity is ambiguous, the one moment someone is a student, the other he is member of a tribe. It is not carved in stone. It is also important to which school a person went or where he got his wife from."⁹⁰

Remarkably, the accounts of two respondents suggest that the preoccupation with tribal structures is deeply engrained in the practice of knowledge production. Namely, it is suggested that the tribes something they could make concrete in their products, *justifying* their practice of knowledge production in a complex environment:

"(...) Intelligence personnel came up with enormous family trees that they had disentangled, which was also a way of proving to the staff that they were busy and provided something concrete. (...) They were presented to the commander as being important, in a beautiful Power Point presentation. They would then receive a tap on the shoulder. They acquired a sense of grip on [Afghan, red.] society."⁹¹ (Emphasis added).

Interestingly, Belcher (2013) also identified a preoccupation within the US intelligence community with tribal structures, which he argues to be a

⁸⁹ Int. Code: MISC03, telephone interview held with author on 27-06-2014

⁹⁰ Int. Code: MISC03, telephone interview held with author on 27-06-2014

⁹¹ Int. Code: MISC03, telephone interview held with author on 27-06-2014

discursive practice of legitimation of the instalment of civil defence forces, or local militias. According to him, illuminating the authenticity and historicity of 'the local' in Afghanistan discursively enabled the US Armed Forces to execute an exit strategy in which security was to be provided within the existing indigenous structures of the tribes (Belcher, 2013). This illustrates how the knowledge produced by intelligence unavoidably has policy implications. As such, instead of being neutral, knowledge is constructed in a constant interaction with the authority located in the field of command and that of politics.

Dichotomies

Lastly, two conceptual dichotomies also seem to be assumed by the intelligence community, namely 'threat to the force' versus 'threat to the mission' and 'enemy- versus population centric intelligence'. These binaries might be very common-sensical, but there are logical fallacies hidden in both of them.

Firstly, the threat to the force and threat to the mission form a binary pair. However, a threat to the force, an actor or event that poses such a threat, will automatically also directly and indirectly pose a threat to the mission. At the same time, a threat to the mission can also be a threat to the force. However, this conceptual binary is embedded in the dominant disposition to emphasise force protection over long-term mission effects. This can be traced back to the domestic political debate addressed in the section on the field. Namely, in the parliamentary debate concerning the military contribution to MINUSMA references to Srebrenica still resurfaced⁹².

Secondly, intelligence personnel as well as many doctrines and reports speak of enemy-centric intelligence and population-centric intelligence, terms that are also associated with respectively *traditional* and *non-traditional* intelligence. However, it should be noted that in many civil wars the enemy is

⁹² The management of *threat to the force* was extensively discussed in the Foreign Affairs commisionary debate on the 11th of December in The Hague.

very hard to define – let alone distinguish from the population (Kalyvas, 2006). Besides the academic consensus that exists on this notion, many interviewees also recognize and underline this notion. However, they repeatedly apply the dichotomy, mostly as a heuristic tool, which suggests there is still a cognitive frame that reproduces the concept – shaping organizational doxa that mediate knowledge.

CONCLUSION

In short, this section demonstrated that the analysis within the intelligence community proceeds according to a positivist epistemology. The significance of this is that there are strong influences from both the field and the habitus on these presuppositions. In the complex environments the military face, the pressure from the leadership generates a focus on causality, prediction and quantitative measurement. In addition, the conceptual dichotomies that were presented simplify and fuse – and hence misconceive – empirical dynamics on the ground. It is argued that the aggregation process of local knowledge towards the fusion cell reinforces such generalizations along with their disputable premises. Although the systemic complexity of the operational environment is recognized and conceptualized by a doctrinally prescribed System of Systems framework, the interconnectedness between the different layers and plates that the analysts seemed to 'fill in' was hardly operationalized so that it could be readily applied by analysts. How the structural configurations of the field – generating a disposition to practice knowledge quick and dirty – reproduces presuppositions to knowledge production as described above will be further illustrated in the case study of MINUSMA.

CHAPTER CONCLUSION

This chapter demonstrated that there is intimate relationship between organizational structures within the organization and the practice of knowledge production in the intelligence community.

Within the Dutch Armed Forces, knowledge production is organized as something separate from other functions of the organization. Quite arbitrarily, it is designed in a way that assumes that knowledge can be separated from the authority of the commander. As such, intelligence is to neutrally inform the commander and is thereby not responsible for the implications their products have on how it is used in decision-making. At the same time, according to my interpretation, accountability is also diverted away from the commander. Namely, if, hypothetically, a 'perfectly organized' intelligence 'chain' produces the knowledge that he bases his decision on, he is less responsible for his decision than if he would also officially 'produce' knowledge.

This separation is brought into *practice* by a highly rationalized form of *knowledge management*, of which the underlying assumption seems to be that by filling all the functions and effectively organizing all the channels, data will be merged to shape knowledge. This assumption implies that knowledge is considered a tangible object, which exists outside social relations and can be 'collected' and *commodified*. Based on this assumption, what remains is for the organization to properly organize the management of this knowledge and 'good knowledge' will surface. Such management was demonstrated to involve a hierarchical intelligence pyramid in which knowledge production is bureaucratized through a system of Intelligence Collection Plans (ICPs). Hence, practices are organized in functions, positions and channels, which seems to suggest that they are considered neutral from the persons who occupy them.

As such, the image, yet not proof, emerging from this evidence coincides with the theoretical notion that organizations and institutions extensively rationalize their knowledge production process to legitimize and justify their actions (Alvesson, 1993; Bourdieu, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The theoretical premise of this idea is that instead of considering knowledge as a neutral object, it is socially constructed through, in this case, organizational practice (Bourdieu, 1991; Foucault, 1976).

Inspired by that similarity between my evidence and such theoretical ideas, I problematized the notion that knowledge management would provide neutrality by demonstrating the thin line between knowledge production and command; from data it seems as though boundaries are contested through the policy implications analysts convey in their products to influence decision-making. At the same time, there seems to be indirect pressure exercised by commanders on their sub-ordinate intelligence personnel. Namely the latter are to aggregate knowledge and present products about a large and complex geographical area in a concise product with significant time constraints. Theoretically, this is conceptualized as a habitus that consists the "rules of the game" of intelligence (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10).

These practices seem to induce a positivist approach to knowledge production. Despite the aim to produce non-traditional intelligence concerning local, non-kinetic dynamics, the disposition to focus on predictions seems to undermine this objective. This means that quantifying causal hypotheses seems - based on the accounts of the analysts interviewed and archival sources in this study - to be dominant analytical approach. Assumptions and categorizations regarding tribal structures, enemies and threats seem to be associated with the relationship between analysts and commanders. For example, it is suggested that the focus on disentangling tribal structures is induced by the pressure analysts feel to provide command with clear, tangible maps - as was possible in the case of traditional intelligence.

As such, this chapter analysed the taken-for granted practices that are structuring knowledge production, based on the informants' experiences of different military missions. This created an image of organizational practices that were conceptualized through theoretical concepts as organizational rationalization and practice (Alvesson, 1993; Bourdieu, 1991). From this analysis, I have become under the impression that the configurations within the organization, treating knowledge as a neutral object, implicitly diffuse

accountability from both the intelligence community and the level of command. As such, the findings presented seem to support the notion of "myths of technocracy" that Alvesson (1993) hypothesizes to be at hand in organizational practices of knowledge production (1993:999). However, as it was also demonstrated how these configuration are reflected upon and disputed by the informants, a more dynamic insight through the direct study of a case could shed more light on this. Therefore, this study will now turn to the intelligence community's contribution to MINUSMA.

CHAPTER TWO: MANIFESTATION OF PRACTICE WITHIN MINUSMA

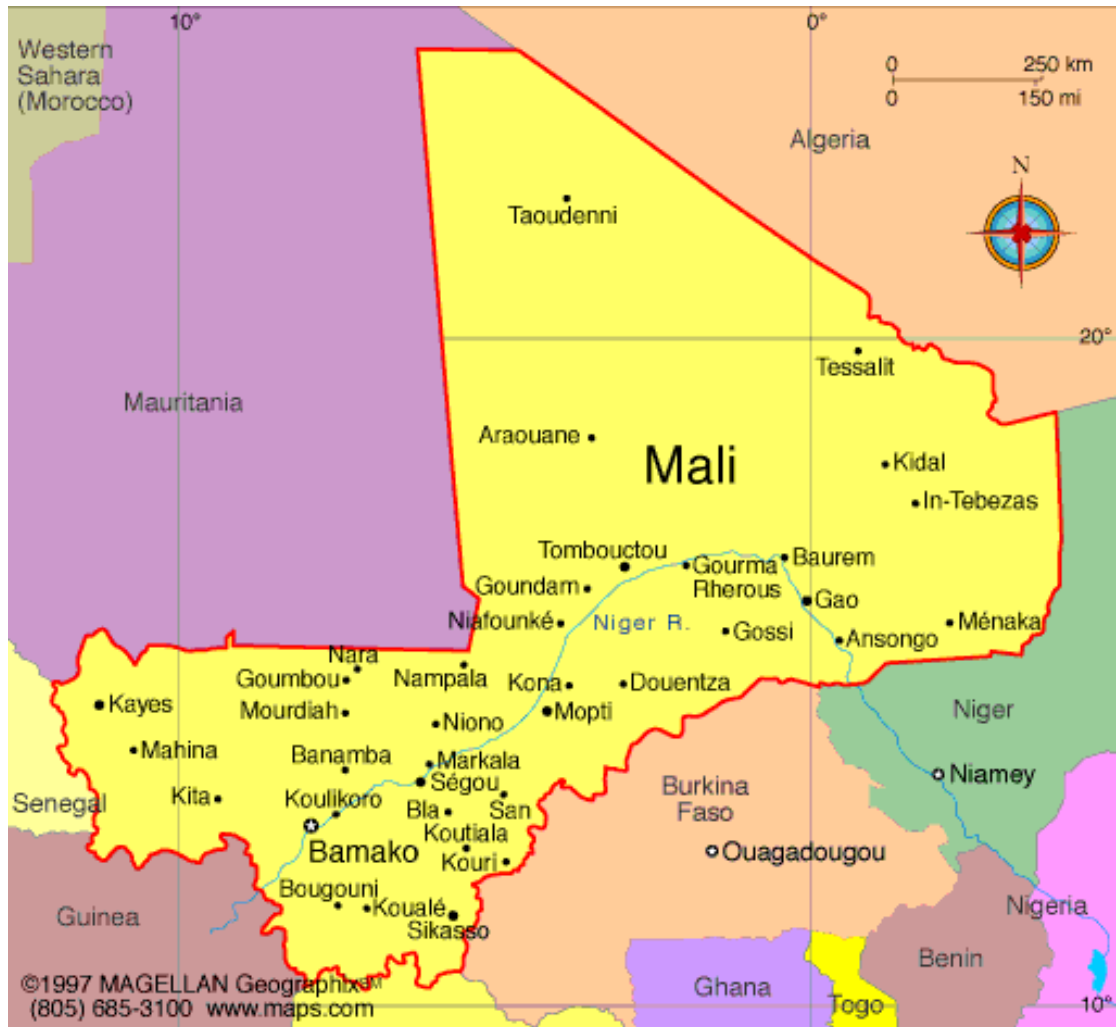


Figure 1: Political map of Mali (MAGGELAN Geographix, 1997)

INTRODUCTION

The Dutch intelligence contribution to MINUSMA⁹³ has started deploying since late 2013 and is comprised of a total of about 400 military personnel, among which 220 are deployed for intelligence personnel (MoD, 2013). The latter group consists of 70 analysts, supported by 90 Special Forces and 60 for an Apache (helicopter) detachment. Hence, the mission can be considered as intelligence oriented. Officially, it is stated that the Dutch contribution seeks to fill a "niche-capacity", aiming to increase the effectiveness of the mission (MoD, 2013:1). Unofficially, the objective of the Dutch has been explained to me as (1) seeking to build a sound *non-traditional* intelligence architecture that leaves a good impression on the foreign partners within the mission and (2) to have as much influence as possible on the decision making of the Mission Head, the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). In the light of the previous chapter, both objectives draw particular attention to the question of how they are reflected in the organizational practice of knowledge.

How do they organize their practices of knowledge production? Will this proceed through a pyramid structure through which local knowledge has to be aggregated? The analysts that are deployed by the Netherlands are mainly based in the Malian capital, Bamako. They form the predominantly Dutch Fusion Cell (All Source Information Fusion Unit, ASIFU), and are to collate and fuse all the locally collected 'data' from the whole of Mali into intelligence products for the commander and his senior staff at the Head Quarters. How will these configurations of the 'field' influence the practice of knowledge production? What 'rules of the game' are at hand?

Concerning their influence on decision making, the question arises how their somewhat unconventional aim to actively *influence* decision making will play out within this multi-national MINUSMA mission, as the larger field

⁹³ For more information on the larger MINUSMA objectives and mandate, see the 2100 resolution (2013). For more background information about the conflict in Mali, an analytically useful overview is provided by Lindberg (2013).

of which the Dutch are part. There are different intelligence cells that co-exist besides ASIFU and as part of non-traditional intelligence; ASIFU is also tasked to intensively share information with the civilian part of the mission. How will this affect the interaction between intelligence and decision-making? – between knowledge and the authority of command?

By answering these questions I will try to gain insight into the transferability and robustness of the practices depicted in the first chapter, especially as the Dutch intelligence community is deployed in a different, non-NATO organization, namely the UN. This will turn out to entail quite some differences with the intensive experiences in Uruzgan.

To fulfil this aim, this chapter will begin by presenting a dynamic tension between the disposition of classifying intelligence products and the use and sharing of local, often civilian knowledge. Next, it will demonstrate how the practice of managerially aggregating knowledge is affecting the use of local knowledge unless an imminent threat to the force is observed. Lastly, an analysis will be provided of the ambiguity of the neutrality of intelligence within the MINUSMA mission, as several intelligence cells appear to compete over influence on the decision-makers at the Head Quarters.

SHARING KNOWLEDGE

As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, the internalized disposition within the intelligence community to systematically classify a lot of their knowledge products was hampering the sharing of knowledge. This caused knowledge from different actors, such as (I)(N)GOs and academics – to be taken into account to a only a limited extent.⁹⁴ Within MINUSMA, sharing of information between countries and departments within the force, as well as between military and civilians is proclaimed to be of crucial importance to the effectiveness of the mission.⁹⁵ The use of intelligence is relatively new within the UN. The reluctance towards it is often attributed to the negative

⁹⁴ TNO (2010). Classified document

⁹⁵ *Artikel 100 brief* and Interview Code INTEL05, interview held with the author on 28-05-2014

connotations intelligence has with espionage (Dorn, 2009). However, the crises in Rwanda and Srebrenica are often associated with the lack of effective intelligence (Dorn, 2009). As a solution to this dilemma, intelligence has been incorporated into UN peacekeeping under the banner of *information*. During my fieldwork, military personnel instantly corrected me when using the word intelligence, which left me with the impression that the word was considerably sensitive.

According to the intelligence planner at the Directorate of Operations, the adoption of intelligence fell under the restriction that classification of products and documents is to be reduced to a minimum.⁹⁶ However, both within the force as well as with the civilian component of the mission, there appears to be a reluctance to share information.

SHARING WITHIN FORCE

Within the force, this reluctance was observed between personnel from different countries. Although it is not clear exactly where the line is drawn, this reluctance appeared to be most evident between NATO countries and other countries. An informant at the FHQ phrased it in the following way: "the countries that ski on the one hand, and the countries that don't ski on the other."⁹⁷ On first sight, my observations suggested this was quite an accurate division, because hardly any interaction could be observed between NATO and non-NATO military. However, it should be noted that when during an intelligence meeting two Spanish military – stating to be representing their embassy – took part in the meeting, several other NATO-member state intelligence officers expressed their suspicion towards them.⁹⁸

The observed meeting was intended to be open to any department, civilian or military, but only NATO member, military personnel actually attended. Remarkably, what was supposed to be a platform of discussion and

⁹⁶ Informal conversation of Staff member with the author

⁹⁷ Int. Code: STAFF02, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

⁹⁸ Informal conversation held by the author with intelligence officers after an intelligence meeting on 19-06-2014

sharing⁹⁹, besides very brief presentations and some discussion, hardly any exchange or interaction took place. However, after the meeting was finished and we moved to the lobby for a cup of coffee, small groups were formed in which intensive discussion was going on. The officers were seated remarkably close to each other and with backs bent forward – all of them spoke with a low tone of voice. Suspecting – but my no means certain – that I was observing routine of actual sharing of intelligence, I asked my gatekeeper if this was the case, which he confirmed.

Upon asking why this was the procedure, I was explained that the classification system within the UN was creating problems for national governments to openly share information with the wide scope of states that were represented within MINUSMA: "National sharing versus international sharing is a big issue (...)." ¹⁰⁰ According to several informants, there was a relation between the fact that there were no clear and discrete levels of classification valid with the UN and the willingness to share information. Allegedly, when countries had so little control as to who would receive information and who would not, they often chose to share it only nationally or with fellow NATO member state officers in their network. ¹⁰¹

According to one interviewee, the different classification system – and the subsequent reluctance to sharing – reinforces rumours throughout the FHQ. The latter, according to him, was negatively affecting the whole operation given the central role the FHQ plays in the line of command, both militarily as well as civilian. Note that despite the reluctance to share, when a threat to the force is at stake, it is said classification systems and sharing reluctance are surpassed. This illustrates how the previously addressed conceptual dichotomy between threat to the force and threat to the mission affects the organizational dynamics of knowledge production: it is treated as a weigh-off, in which a direct threat to the force is prioritized over the long

⁹⁹ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹⁰⁰ Int. Code: INTEL17, interview held with the author on 19-06-2014

¹⁰¹ Informal conversation between an intelligence officer and the author

term objectives of the mission. The pivotal role of threats to the force in the MINUSMA mission will come closer to the fore later in this section.

SHARING WITH CIVILIANS

The inconsistency between the UN's highly valued openness on the one hand, and the increased secrecy in practice on the other hand, also seems to have an effect on sharing with civilians. This particularly concerned the exchange of local knowledge to the staff at FHQ. The civilian staff also constitutes personnel of many different nationalities and the NATO systems of are not applicable to them. For example, an intelligence officer complained about the difference between Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) on how to release documents between the civilian and the military domain.¹⁰² When the same intelligence officer was asked how he would prefer to solve the lack of sharing, he answered: "But then people would need to know our Request for Information (RFI)¹⁰³ procedures. People need to know what an RFI is, need to know how to work it and where to push it to."¹⁰⁴

A senior staff member acknowledged this problem and also emphasized the different set of organizational structures and rules that were encountered in the – largely civilian – UN mission: "[We] are trying to implement a system which civilians are not waiting for. Then you are forcing civilians to comply by your system. If you go to a restaurant and it does not matter what you order, but you always get fries with it, you eventually will get sick of it (*over de zeik*)¹⁰⁵. Interestingly, this very same person – when reflecting on the role of knowledge generated by ASIFU in the decision-making process – said that intelligence often comes up with "another Open Source (*OSINT*)¹⁰⁶ story, [which] has no added value."¹⁰⁷ Although not

¹⁰² Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹⁰³ Military abbreviation for Request For Information, a formalised procedure to acquire information from a different unit

¹⁰⁴ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹⁰⁵ Int. Code:: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

¹⁰⁶ OSINT is an abbreviation for Open Source Intelligence, which refers to

¹⁰⁷ Int. Code:: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

conclusive evidence, this suggests the common practice of classification also imposes expectations on ASIFU that might induce a tendency to overemphasize classified – mostly non-civilian – information.

Hence, it seems as if the habitus of intelligence that is typical for most NATO-member states collides with the organizational field of the UN, where a different history and a different set of rules are dominant. The resulting unwillingness to share information indicates the tenacity of the habitus that has shaped itself through social experiences and organizational structures. In accordance with Bourdieu, this can be conceptualized as a dislocation or alienation of habitus from the field (Bourdieu in Hardy, 2008). Such a "hysteresis" is argued to occur when a disruption in the congruent relationship between the habitus and the field takes place (Bourdieu in Hardy, 2008:126). In this case, the habitus – historically generated within the domestic NATO configurations – is moving into a different field. The emerging incongruence is, at least among the analysts I have interviewed, solved by sharing knowledge in tight networks of mutual trust, resulting in the partial exclusion of non-NATO and civilian personnel.

SURPRISING 'QUALITY' OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

Although it did often not arrive at the strategic military level, local knowledge that did exist among military and civilians was experienced to be of a 'surprising' quality. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which besides its humanitarian work also acts as a liaison between NGOs and the military component, is said to have 'valuable' local knowledge that was difficult to incorporate in the reporting to the FHQ staff. For example, a CIMIC staff member explained that he usually received very 'dry' intelligence reports from Timbuctu. However, based on reports from OCHA, it turned out that the military division in the area was already producing relevant local knowledge that OCHA provided: "they had mapped out areas where the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were expected, because that will spark new local dynamics. They will want

their houses back, their cattle, use the same water tap. Tensions can rise because of that, which they had largely mapped out as well. Much more turned out to be done than we could see from Bamako."¹⁰⁸

It seems that in this case, local knowledge from civilians was used, but that it was not processed through the military procedures and therefore did not surface at level of the FHQ. A statement from an intelligence officer at the FHQ supports this: "We are probably not getting enough *bottom-up* information from the civilian side."¹⁰⁹(Emphasis added). Hence, the findings presented in this section suggest that the incongruence of the organizational habitus of the intelligence community in its current field limits the inclusion of local knowledge at the level where authority is situated.

THREAT TO THE FORCE: WHEN AGGREGATION IS SURPASSED

Next to classification, there is another reason that limited use is made of – allegedly available and valuable – local knowledge. This section will demonstrate that the aggregation of local knowledge undermines the level of detail that ultimately reaches decision-makers. Interestingly, the organizational practice of aggregation and fusion of information seems only to be overruled in case of a *threat to the force* or other forms of violence. What they consider as a *threat to the mission* seems to be more strictly processed through the conventional system.

AGGREGATION

In accordance with the presented findings presented in chapter one, MINUSMA has also designed its intelligence architecture to be based on the fusion of local knowledge. The latter is pushed up from the local sections towards the ASIFU and the FHQ, where it is concisely presented to the commander and his staff.

As mentioned before, the All Source Intelligence Fusion Unit is the organizational body that is similar to what was referred to as Fusion Cell in

¹⁰⁸ Int. Code:: STAFF03, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹⁰⁹ Int. Code:: STAFF03, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

the previous chapter and seems to function correspondingly: "Intelligence is set up as a push-system. Information is being brought to us (ASIFU) presented on a plate (*presenteerblaadje*). Actually, you only have to connect it with each other."¹¹⁰ In support of this view, the senior staff officer stated that aggregation is exactly for which it is designed: "(...) to take into account all the economic, personal, cultural (...) factors."¹¹¹ When asked what kind of difference an aggregated report made in comparison with one of the constituent local reports, an intelligence officer explained: "The scope is about the same: social dimensions, military, security, etcetera. The context is also the same but the aggregation level is different"¹¹², after which he continued to explain how they had to "zoom out" and decrease the level of detail in adherence. (Emphasis added).¹¹³ Another intelligence officer supports the notion that compromises are made to the level of detail of knowledge products: "the higher you come, the more you have to let go of [details] (...). You can't know all the details. You have to be able to give a global picture. Otherwise you drown in details."¹¹⁴ Lastly, it should be noted that the disposition to aggregate knowledge is, again, situated in the generic division between the tactical, operational and strategic level: "We're strategic headquarters. I am not really interested in what happens in Gao on a daily base."¹¹⁵ We watch it, but that's not important to us on a daily base."¹¹⁶

THE CONSEQUENCES OF AGGREGATION

The process of aggregation – itself induced by the hierarchical relations of the organization – generates several tendencies to the practice of intelligence that correspond with those depicted in the first chapter. These "rules of the game" are inherent to the role assigned to intelligence at the FHQ: to provide

¹¹⁰ Int. Code: INTEL13, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹¹¹ Int. Code: STAFF05, interview held with the author on 22-06-2014

¹¹² Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹¹³ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹¹⁴ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹¹⁵ Gao is a city in Northern Mali, approximately 900 km away from Mali's capital, Bamako.

¹¹⁶ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

knowledge that can be used for decision making and contains predictions, covers concerning the whole of Mali in concise products, while a large amount of daily events are taking place (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10). As will be demonstrated below, these propensities, summarized as predictability, conciseness and timeliness, are reproduced through the expectations the commander imposes on his intelligence personnel.

Predictability: The impression is created that that making predictions is actively encouraged by the level of command. For example, a senior staff member says: "It is useless to me if, in the end, it turns out that there is not a single mistake in a report. Then it will have been useless to me because it is limited [to what is completely certain]."¹¹⁷ Although not conclusive, this account suggests that analysts are inclined to make a trade-off between the risk of making mistakes and the predictive ambition of a product.

Timeliness: Another important and closely related requirement is timeliness. The interviewed senior staff member complains: "if it was up to them [ASIFU], I would get a report about the [recent] fall of Kidal from before it actually happened. You have to realize that such a report will end up in the bin."¹¹⁸ He claims that given the national level at which ASIFU is positioned, the difference with Uruzgan is that there is much more to overlook and fuse. The analysts are therefore obliged to react quickly and from all the information that comes in, to report what is going on within "6 hours". Something which, according to him, they were used to have "between 72 and 96 hours" for.¹¹⁹

Conciseness: MINUSMA is not fully deployed yet, while the dynamics of the conflict are rapidly developing. Many informants claim to be under quite a lot of time pressure and that a lot of pressure falls on the Staff making decisions. According to most informants, this affects the requirements of their

¹¹⁷ Int. Code: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

¹¹⁸ Int. Code: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

¹¹⁹ Int. Code: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

intelligence products. Although it is recognized that the situation in Mali – which the FHQ is to cover in its totality – is very complex, an interviewee elaborates: "Yes it is hard to be concise, using many pages is easier. But the Force Commander will not have time to read all those pages. That will go directly into the bin."¹²⁰ A junior analyst, after being asked how she deals with this, states: "Bottom line up front is what is most important. The SRSG and Force Commander receive so many products. They have to be able to understand something in one sentence. (...) Otherwise, you will get your product back, that is something you learn."¹²¹

CONFIRMATION FROM THE LOCAL LEVEL

Despite the formal procedures used to aggregate 'information', there are cases in which more informal, direct reach back to the local level takes place. Yet, this seems to mostly involve the confirmation of propositions or hypotheses. Similar to the findings on the 'doxa' of knowledge production depicted earlier, local units are tasked to "confirm or deny it whether is it true or not. Do we know where he is and what [the suspect] is doing? Collect as much information as possible to test that."¹²² Moreover, when the senior staff member was asked about such reach back activity, he only referred to this as "the patrolling reports – and that mostly involves confirmation."¹²³ The latter statement suggests reach back to the local level is not done through direct communication, but simply looking up *other* products. However, it should be noted that some analysts claim they did have direct contact with local units over the phone.

STRATEGIC LEVEL MIGHT KNOW BETTER?

Although the policy behind non-traditional intelligence generally propagates the use of *local* knowledge, no consensus exists on the value of such an emphasis among the interviewees (Flynn, 2010). Apart from the general

¹²⁰ Int. Code:: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

¹²¹ Int. Code: INTEL13, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹²² Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹²³ Int. Code:: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

consensus that local knowledge is 'important', some share the opinion that the benefit over *oversight* is that you can determine whether something reported locally is actually relevant: "The people on the ground naturally have much better affinity and detail over what takes place in a local environment, but they do not have the *larger picture*. So they might think tolerating the MNLA is completely wrong, but they might not understand – on a higher level – why the MNLA does that."¹²⁴ (Emphasis added). Reversely, so it is argued, when nothing is reported locally, this does not mean nothing relevant is happening: "You can go to a village, 3 or 4 times in a row determine it is relatively quiet. But if you zoom out, you might be able to see that it is a junction of interest to different armed groups."¹²⁵ However, this perception that oversight can be generated in this way might also be understood as a justification interviewees construct for their practices.

Although it is claimed the local level is mostly needed for confirmation, the intelligence community within MINUSMA was also experiencing it difficult to understand the dynamics 'on the ground'. Although this study was limited in its direct access to the practice of knowledge production, two intelligence meetings were attended. In one of these meetings the issue was raised that at local checkpoints along major routes, members of armed groups were sometimes arrested that, after having been searched, turned out to carry membership cards of multiple armed groups active in the region.¹²⁶ This is an example of an ambiguity faced that problematizes the assumption that local knowledge can be acquired by, often quantitatively, testing hypotheses stated at the Head Quarters. A civil-military expert deployed by the Dutch Armed Forces in MINUSMA was, as an outsider to the intelligence community, more reflexive on this aspect. He problematized the quantitative focus in the Malian conflict environment:

¹²⁴ Int. Code:: STAFF05, interview held with author on 22-06-2014

¹²⁵ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹²⁶ 1400 meeting Situation Update attended by the author on 19-06-2014

"What is the strength of MUJAO¹²⁷? Is there even a 'strength' of MUJAO? Is there number that can indicate all those fighting for them? And is it also really that number, and not another number?"¹²⁸

Another gap between the proclaimed focus on local knowledge and the actual practice of knowledge production lies in the perceived quality and quantity of local knowledge. Regarding quantity, several informants argue that multiple countries with regional responsibility in the North did not have the technical capability to provide 'sufficient' information: "There is only one Computer in the whole of Tessalit, which does not function."¹²⁹ In addition, there is claimed to be a lack of a functioning database to store all the products.

In terms of quality, an often-heard complaint is that reporting skills of local sections lack fundamentally. As one intelligence officer states: "Reporting skills lack, [the local units] do not speak English and because they do not know how to ask the right questions - because they have no idea what the importance of the intelligence is."¹³⁰ In addition, it is said that the quality of reports are limited because they are often based on a single patrol "(...) and mostly it sticks to a single visit."¹³¹ The result, according to one interviewee, is that he has seen "maybe only 5 reports that are more in-depth about smaller towns."¹³² Another informant claims that as a result, "hardly any [local] knowledge reaches up to the decision making level."¹³³

Despite the treatment and availability of local knowledge as depicted above, there are circumstances - as will be elaborated on later - in which local knowledge receives immediate attention. This proceeds through informal communication: "The commander wanted to know something, so we went

¹²⁷ The Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is an armed group currently active in the north of Mali

¹²⁸ Int. Code: STAFF03, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹²⁹ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹³⁰ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹³¹ Int. Code: STAFF03, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹³² Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹³³ Int. Code: STAFF04, interview held with the author on 19-06-2014

and found."¹³⁴ Sometimes, it is said, they simply had to physically travel there, but most of the time, they had to do it over the phone – with mixed results, as language barriers were often experienced.¹³⁵ However, two informants say that by speaking to people personally, it turned out – in support of findings presented earlier – they acquired knowledge that they considered valuable: "that certain things were done with good consideration, although you do not see that back in the reports."¹³⁶ Hence, they do seem to perceive local knowledge as a valuable contribution. Yet, they do not structurally take local details into account in the products they present to the senior staff unless a threat to the force presents itself – as will be elaborated next.

URGENCY OF "THREAT TO THE FORCE"

When a Threat to the Force presents itself, or when violence breaks out, direct communication *is* usually initiated with local units, requiring analysts to breach formal barriers associated with his strategic position: "We still lack personnel, so we have to pick up tasks that are not ours. But we do it because you can live without *strategic overview* for some time, but you can't let men go out of the wire tomorrow and not know certain stuff."¹³⁷ (Emphasis added). Another intelligence officer explains that "time-sensitive", "military threats" usually enjoy priority.¹³⁸ When explaining why little attention was paid structurally to local dynamics an intelligence officer said: "Whether or not the surrounding towns turn into MNLA¹³⁹ land and Gao is the only bastion out there, that is of much higher importance to us. Because that puts pressure on the strategic level and on the people in Gao." After explaining the importance of (non-traditional) PMESII factors, one informant went on to say "But on this

¹³⁴ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹³⁵ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹³⁶ Int. Code: INTEL13, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹³⁷ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹³⁸ Int. Code: INTEL12, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹³⁹ Mouvement National de Liberation de l'Azawad (MNLA) is an armed political movement active in the North of Mali and has taken over control of Kidal on 21-05-2014

[FHQ, red] level, it is mostly violence [that receives attention, red], what kind of violence is used – violence that is related to this conflict. Is it getting worse, is there an increase? Do we hear strange elements come back?"¹⁴⁰.

In conclusion, through the 'rule of the game' to only 'skip' the aggregation procedures in case of violence, the focus on kinetic dynamics that are associated with traditional intelligence retain priority. The attention to violence is also closely related to the domestic political dimension of several countries. As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, political imperatives – as in this case the safety of the troops themselves – are so pivotal that they constrain the daily practice of intelligence. Namely, intelligence is directed to focus on topics that are politically important, rather than crucial to the dynamics of conflict. A dynamic that gives additional insight into how instead of neutrality and distance, constant negotiation takes place between knowledge and decision-making.

COMPETITION OR NEUTRALITY

The last recurring pattern in the data collected in Mali also concerns the alleged, but ambiguous, neutrality of intelligence. Although interviewees within MINUSMA also expressed the perceived importance of neutrality of intelligence towards decision-making, competition between different intelligence cells was a commonly mentioned topic. In fact, analysts from different cells were accusing other cells to try to acquire a certain extent of monopoly on advising the staff. The predominantly Dutch Fusion Cell, ASIFU, was mentioned most in this regard.

NEUTRALITY

Neutrality was highly ambiguous: "In the beginning we wrote reports with recommendations (...). [But] if you purely look at the theory on intelligence, an analyst should never sit on the chair of a policy maker."¹⁴¹ She explains that they therefore stopped provide recommendations, but were later asked

¹⁴⁰ Int. Code: INTEL13, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹⁴¹ Int Code: INTEL15, interview held with the author on 18-06-2014

by the Senior Management to continue providing them. As was found in the first chapter, there seems to be a thin line between influence and neutrality, which can be illustrated by the account of an ASIFU analyst: "We try to give advice, so we are not directly involved in decision making. (...) We are not allowed to say exactly what should be done, but we can provide a prognosis (*handelingsperspectief*)."¹⁴² It can be interpreted from this statement that she thus conveys here advice subtly in her prognosis.

COMPETITION

The different cells seem to deal with this thin line by competing actively amongst each other over the influence on the Staff. One officer is claiming that ASIFU is not providing the other intelligence cells with regular briefings or reports at the dedicated platforms. He also found it strange that ASIFU is not hierarchically placed under the staff's intelligence cell (U2).¹⁴³ This is can indeed be considered somewhat unusual, because ASIFU is certainly lower in the hierarchy than U2 but yet, the Commander of ASIFU outranks the Commander of U2. He also says he has "no idea what ASIFU does"¹⁴⁴, and insinuates that ASIFU has a direct line to the SRSG - which was later confirmed by a senior ASIFU analyst. Moreover, as an unofficial objective of the NLD contribution to MINUSMA is to build a robust intelligence system and to have an influence on the upper decision making level¹⁴⁵.

According to a U2 analyst, the competition over the intelligence role also affects the level of sharing between both cells: "Why would you share if you compete over the same job?"¹⁴⁶. When asked how he dealt with the lack of sharing, he said: "Well If I can't read it I can't know. So what I have to do is, instead of being given the reports, go and hunt them down - and say hey, I

¹⁴² Int. Code: INTEL13, interview held with the author on 16-06-2014

¹⁴³ The U2 is an intelligence cell that is directly placed in the staff, while ASIFU is the Fusion Cell that is lower in the hierarchy and although they provide products, they are not in the direct interaction with the commander as U2 is. In addition, their camp is located a 30 minutes drive away from the FHQ

¹⁴⁴ Int. Code: STAFF02, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

¹⁴⁵ Int. Code: INTEL05, interview held with the author on 28-05-2014

¹⁴⁶ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

heard you just sent report number so and so, what about the other three? Because they weren't there! They were not distributed actively, only selectively. I don't like that but I don't know how to fix it."¹⁴⁷ These accounts are often referring to the motivations of third persons, and describe events that could not be directly observed in this research. However, what can be derived from this is that mutual suspicion between different intelligence cells exists. Also, it has supposedly had negative effects on the *sharing* of information between the cells.

In conclusion, these findings support the notion that the intelligence, as a field, is *arbitrarily* separated in the organizational structure, while in fact engaged in a constant interaction. The interviewees experienced this dynamic as the sharing of knowledge as it is propagated in the policy of non-traditional intelligence. True or not, it does reflect the continuous dispute over the boundaries of the field of authority of command on the one hand, and the field of knowledge on the other. The result is an organizational dynamic that affects knowledge production in ways that problematizes the assumption that knowledge can be produced neutrally, like a resource that simply needs a practical infrastructure in order to become valuable knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This chapter applied the findings of chapter one on a current case, in which the dynamics and cross-cuttings between the different concepts were identified. As theory of practice of practice suggested, the change of fields, the effects of configurations on the "rules of the game" of knowledge production and the predominant focus on the threat to the force all demonstrated that knowledge is produced through organizational practices (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10).

The change of larger field from NATO to UN caused problems concerning the disposition to classifying intelligence products at the cost of their own emphasis on openness and sharing. As the UN does not have a

¹⁴⁷ Int. Code: INTEL14, interview held with the author on 17-06-2014

classification system like NATO, the habitus seemed to be 'disconnected' from its field. In addition, the organizational structure that dictates the aggregation and management of knowledge caused the local social dynamics to be largely overlooked unless an urgent threat to the force made the commander decide otherwise. Lastly, it was again demonstrated that configurations that are meant to preserve distance and neutrality of knowledge from decision-making were hardly accepted. Instead, the influence on authority is competed over, which possibly inclines intelligence to adjust their practice of knowledge production to the needs, and implicitly, power, of the commander.

Hence, many of the characteristics of the practice of knowledge production in the intelligence community that were inductively identified turned out to be sufficiently 'robust' to be transfer from the experiences in Afghanistan to the current deployment in MINUSMA. In addition, the somewhat abstract connections between concepts like field, habitus and doxa that were drawn in the previous chapter appeared to have very concrete implications within a dynamic military mission.

CONCLUSION

To answer the research question, I aimed to understand the organizational dynamics of knowledge production in the Dutch intelligence community. After applying an inductive research approach to explore and identify the practice of knowledge production in the first chapter, the second chapter set out to understand how these practices affected the dynamics of knowledge production in actual organizational working environment; within MINUSMA in Mali.

The prime conclusion is that the Dutch intelligence community has created a vary rationalized and specialized structure of practicing intelligence that is based on an inherent underlying assumption that knowledge is a neutral object that can be collected, disseminated and aggregated into neutral and objective knowledge. However, my findings suggest that knowledge is largely constructed through the dynamic interaction between managerial organizational procedures and their adherent *practice* of knowledge production. This dynamic interaction involves two interrelated patterns.

Firstly, the pyramid structure of authority means that knowledge has to similarly be aggregated upwards through a pyramid of different functions to reach the commander who has the authority to base decision on it. Due to this configuration, intelligence has adopted dispositions, or "rules of the game", to how knowledge is produced. Namely, knowledge has to be presented concise, timely and convey a prediction (Bourdieu, 2005:195 in Emirbayer & Johnson, 2008:10). In the case of MINUSMA, where analysts were dealing with a large and dynamic conflict environment, this turns out to cause a lack of use of local knowledge. Instead, they assume will surface because it is efficiently aggregated through their organizational procedures and protocols.

Secondly, the findings suggest there is a tension between the formally assumed neutrality of intelligence towards command on the one hand, and the constant interaction between the two on the other. Whereas they have

organized intelligence on the principle that intelligence does not influence decision-making and is therefore cleared of pressure, I demonstrated that through the practices in the organization, the boundaries between command and intelligence are constantly negotiated. The commander requires predictions from intelligence personnel, which inclines intelligence to produce knowledge in a positivist manner to be able to present causal relations, predictions and hypotheses. At the same time, the case of MINUSMA demonstrated that the intelligence community is actively advancing their products to influence decision-making.

Hence, by highlighting these ambiguities of neutrality I problematized the managerial approach to knowledge production that assumes that intelligence predicts the weather – and then the commander decides whether he should bring an umbrella. In light of the theoretical debate, I thus concur with the theory concerning the "myths of technocracy" posed by Alvesson (1993:999) and Meyer & Rowan (1977). Although not generalizable beyond my sample, the organizational practices, as they are structured through the protocols of knowledge management, appear to entail an internal logic that seeks to justify the decisions based upon the knowledge produced. Bluntly put, it seems to me as if the organization assumes that as long as the *process* of knowledge production was according to protocol, the commander can not be held accountable for the decision based upon it.

The practices of knowledge production also illuminated a more nuanced view of the organizational practices. I often encountered a significant degree of reflexivity, which indicates that concepts like habitus and field do not completely *determine* the actors' behaviour. With this conclusion I also tap into a debate among scholars that study practices inspired by Bourdieu (1977). Namely, what room for agency is there? Bourdieu himself seemed to be open to different ideas in this regard. On the one hand he seems to be very much focused on how structures influence action, but at the same time he is work has focused very much on change, reflexivity and agency (Bourdieu, 1977; Deer, 2008).

A question about change is also very much applicable to the present case study of organizational knowledge production. Namely, can a large western institution such as the Dutch military, adopt its internalized practices to the complex and foreign communal conflict – or "wicked problems" it finds itself in?¹⁴⁸ The Dutch military seem to have analysed the conflicts in which they are engaged as in need of knowledge about local socio-political dynamics – in other words: non-traditional intelligence. The organization thereby seems to concur with an academic focus on local politics in conflicts, rather than conventional symmetric conflicts. For example, the micro-politics of violence as described by King (2004) and Kalyvas (2003) are concepts that are quite similar to how I often hear military talk about their experience in Afghanistan.

The interesting result however, is that they seem to assume they can gear their intelligence community to fulfil this task through old practices of knowledge management – focusing on filling positions and designing an efficient intelligence chain with internalized dispositions towards *aggregation* and the *prediction* of outcomes. Yet, they seem to be analysing their environment with a focus, for example, on tribal structures because allegedly – these are most tangible and presentable to the commander. Hence, it appears to me that reflexivity only gradually results in 'change' because internalized practices, as is demonstrated in this thesis, might hamper it.

¹⁴⁸ Interview Code INTEL11, interview held with the author on 11-06-2014

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APPENDICES

QUOTED RESPONDENTS

Interview code	Date	Location
INTEL01	02-04-2014	't Harde
INTEL02	07-05-2014	Apeldoorn (NL)
INTEL03	07-05-2014	Apeldoorn (NL)
INTEL04	09-05-2014	Den Haag (NL)
MISC01	12-05-2014	Den Haag (NL)
INTEL05	28-05-2014	Den Haag
MISC02	30-05-2014	N/A (telephone)
INTEL06	02-06-2014	Apeldoorn
INTEL07	03-06-2014	't Harde
INTEL08	03-06-2014	't Harde
INTEL09	04-06-2014	Den Haag
INTEL10	05-06-2014	Den Haag
STAFF01	06-06-2014	Den Haag
INTEL11	11-06-2014	Den Haag
INTEL11	16-06-2014	Bamako
INTEL12	16-06-2014,	Bamako
INTEL13	16-06-2014	Bamako
STAFF02	17-06-2014	Bamako
INTEL14	17-06-2014	Bamako
STAFF03	17-06-2014	Bamako
INTEL15	18-06-2014	Bamako

INTEL16	19-06-2014	Bamako
INTEL17	19-06-2014	Bamako
STAFF04	19-06-2014	Bamako
STAFF05	22-06-2014	Bamako
INTEL12	25-06-2014	Den Haag
MISC03	27-06-2014	N/A (telephone)

TOPIC GUIDE¹⁴⁹

Vooraf

- Geen VGB, , thesis wordt gescreend
- opnemen, stopzetten is mogelijk.
- details van specifieke plaatsen en personen kunnen worden weggelaten.
- Interview is anoniem

Objectives

- Contextualize position and work of the knowledge worker
 - How does he define his work?
 - Hoe ziet het opleidingsmodel eruit?
 - Competenties
 - Lesmethoden
 - Is intelligence an art? a science?
 - Wat is de wetenschappelijke achtergrond van informant?
 - Waarom doet hij dit werk?
 - Hoe is zijn carrièrepad gelopen?
- Establish an understanding of the methods, theories and assumptions:
Discursive practice
 - What kind of **theory** does he apply to population-centric intelligence?
 - What is the **goal** of population centric intelligence?
 - Hoe wordt gedrag van mensen voorspelt?
 - HYPOTHESES
 - Trendanalyse

¹⁴⁹ In accordance with the axial coding techniques, the topic guides were adjusted after respective rounds of coding. In addition, topic guides had to be slightly adjusted depending on the positions and experiences of the informants (eg. active within MINUSMA). The topic guide presented here is considered most representative of the different sets of topic guides.

- Welke informatiebronnen gebruikt hij? OSINT of anders?
- Wat zijn indicatoren?
 - Ontology, epistemology?
- Methoden/operationalisering?
- Welke modellen (representaties) kennen jullie? Heuristic devices?
 - Voor target audience
 - Voor...

- How is the knowledge work of the informant formalized, institutionalized? - *Bureaucracy*
 - Through what protocols do they have to *produce* and *disseminate intelligence*?
 - Hoe wordt ruwe data 'knowledge'?
 - Key formats, actors and events!
 - Welke producten bestaan er en hoe zijn die vormgegeven?
 - Patrouillerapporten?
 - Wat is de invloed van een RFI op jullie werk?
 - Wat zijn 'aangrijpingspunten'? (Inlichtingen in gebruik)
 - Rangverschil; Wat is de rol van rangverschil in het delen van kennis, conclusies?
 - Vraag naar expertise van superieur!?
 - 'klantgerichtheid?' Voldoen aan vraag commandant?
 - Nuance en complexiteit?
 - Tijdigheid vs volledigheid?

- Welke strategieën past de informant toe om een alternatieve blik op zaken te verspreiden?
 - Voorbeeld van een alternatieve conclusie

- Strategie Pro-actief leveren van intelligence, wie wordt benaderd, hoe?
- Welke ruimte bestaat daarvoor, informeel of formeel?
 - Wat voor inlichtingen loopt door deze kanalen?
- Competing hypotheses/devil's advocate?
- Lateraal denken?