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DIALOGUE: INTERSECTIONALIZING EUROPEAN POLITICS: BRIDGING GENDER AND ETHNICITY

Unpacking the Russian doll: gendered and intersectionalized categories in European gender equality policies

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Both theoretically and normatively, the question of whether and how to generalize or specify gendered social actors in policy-making has been much debated. While some stress the need to specify and intersectionalize actors so that interfering power dynamics can be addressed, others highlight the dangers involved in any reification of social categories. This paper analyzes the actual gendered and intersectionalized category-making of social actors in gender equality policies across Europe, using a database of 2088 recent laws, policy plans, and civil society documents on gender equality from 29 countries plus the EU level. Analyzing four policy issues, we find that the generic category “women” is often present, although less in laws. Intersectionalized categories, however, are rare, as is an articulation of these actors’ specific problems or how policies could address their needs. Lastly, we find the category of minoritized women more often used in ways that are open to stigmatization.

Keywords: gender equality policies; category-making; critical frame analysis; gendering; intersectionality

Do policies explicitly talk about “women” where gender inequality is concerned? And, do these policies just mention women or do they also refer to more specific groups of women? Do they refer to “men” at all?

In our understanding of policies as a combined articulation of both diagnosis and prognosis, one can expect policy texts to include an articulation of (categories of) people that are either suffering from a problem or are causing one (diagnosis), as well as an articulation of the groups responsible for doing something about this problem or the groups that are to be subjected to certain policy objectives or actions (prognosis). Combining gender studies and critical frame analysis perspectives (Verloo 2005), we expect gender equality policies to pay attention to gendered social actors in both diagnosis and prognosis. The question is: Is this attention degendered, general, specific, or intersectional? And how are the gendered social actors part of the problematizations and calls for action that are part and parcel of gender equality policies?

There is both reason to expect differentiation (according to the theory and in connection to existing problems of various groups of women) and reason not to expect differentiation (according to earlier research). While it stands to reason that gender equality policies’ focus on gender translates into substantial attention for gendered social actors or positions, comparative research

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on gender policies in Europe have shown that policy documents very frequently refer to women in an undifferentiated way (Verloo, Lombardo, and Bustelo 2007, 283). Moreover, earlier research into cases where the particular problems of specific groups are addressed shows that these problems remain situated at the descriptive level in the diagnosis of the problems, fading away or even disappearing in the prognostic parts of the policy document, the calls for policy action (Verloo, Lombardo, and Bustelo 2007, 283).

Theorizing category-making in gender and policy studies

Categories are central in policy-making (Stone 1988; Yanow 2000). Policy terms used to represent the problem and to consider what action is necessary often explicitly name problem holders and target groups (TGs). In policy-making, categories enable policy-makers to intervene (Yanow 2003). In many cases, these categories refer to existing (historically rooted) social groups that are assumed to share certain characteristics and a particular social membership (Young 2001). This often involves group-based categories that ascribe identities to individuals on the basis of age, religion, ethnicity, nationality/migrant status, class, sexual orientation, marital/family status, and/or disability. Because “political reasoning ... is primarily a reasoning of sameness and difference” (Stone 1988, 308), these identity categories are used to label and compare groups, often in the context of structural inequalities between groups.

Following Stone, we see categories as “human mental constructs ... put on the world in order to help us apprehend it and live in an orderly way” (1988, 307). At the same time, aside from *reflecting* social realities, they also *construct* realities. What is problematic about categories is that they are often treated as natural (Yanow 2003) and they have an essentialist and deterministic tendency. Moreover, sometimes categories also refer to marked identities, which in contrast to unmarked identities are different from the usual case or norm, implying that they are inferior (Yanow 2003, 15). Minow describes the inherent dilemma of categories based on group identities in policies that aim to reduce inequalities as running “the risk of recreating difference by either noticing it or ignoring it” (1990, 40).

In gender studies, marking identities, group-targeted policies, and intersectionality are all heavily debated in conceptual and normative terms (e.g. Crenshaw 1991; Gunnarsson 2011; McCall 2005; Verloo 2006; Walby 2007; Young 2001), with feminist scholars especially showing the reifying implications of using undifferentiated gender and sexual identities (e.g. Crenshaw 1991; Gunnarsson 2011; McCall 2005; Verloo 2006; Walby 2007; Young 2001).

The distinction between generic and specific intersectional gender categories reminds us of a classic Russian doll, where inside of a representation of a social being characterized by gender several other representations remain hidden that are characterized by the intersections between gender, class, social orientation, ethnicity, race, or other inequality markers.

While a unitary approach is criticized for obscuring or ignoring the specific needs of groups of women that are situated at problematic points of intersection of inequality axes (Hancock 2007), others argue that seeing women as sharing a structurally defined social position is not problematic (Young 2005). Gunnarsson is among those arguing in defense of the broad category of “women,” this without denying its deterministic tendency (2011). Contradicting that this category implies essentialism and homogenization per se, Gunnarsson proposes focusing on the “thin commonality” between women to be able to “denote women’s specific relation to a gender structure” (2011, 34). A more gender-differentiated approach is equally fraught with potential problems, as specific attention to certain categories of intersectionalized women runs the risk of stigmatizing or reinforcing stereotypes (Minow 1990; Roggeband and Verloo 2007; Yanow and van der Haar 2013). Moreover, even an intersectionality approach in which different axes of inequality are included in the analysis can still be considered to presume non-existing homogeneities and remain ignorant

of intra-categorical difference, thereby merely reconfiguring rather than dismantling the reification of groupings of difference (Dhamoon 2011).

To empirically study intersectionality, Weldon's concepts of intersectionality-only (there are no autonomous effects of either inequality axis) and intersectionality-plus (there are simultaneous independent and intersectional effects of inequality axes) can be helpful (2006). Her position implies that empirical research can come to theory's aid (to a certain extent), as policy-making could then choose to use generic or specified gender actor categories dependent on whether there are simultaneous independent and intersectional effects of inequality axes.

The articulation of gendered social categories in European gender equality policies

Based on our assessment of previous research and existing gender and intersectionality theory, this article mounts an empirical investigation to assess whether and where there is differentiation of gendered social actors in recent policy and civil society texts from across Europe. We think that the actual presence and absence of categories needs to be documented before we can ask further questions as to what causes these presences and absences and what their effects are.

The empirical questions this paper takes on are meant to clarify a few modest aspects of political intersectionality. How are social inequality categories articulated in policy and civil society texts? How do such texts categorize gender and other social and political "boundaries" at the same time? What is the extent of intra-(gender) categorizing? And what other social and political boundaries are drawn? Aside from these descriptive questions, we will focus on two dimensions that can be expected to cause variations in the use of gendered social categories: the specific issues addressed by policies, belonging to different domains of social reality, and the specific type of text in which they materialize. We expect that the type of issue and the type of text impact the kinds of categories used. Additionally, we will study the variation between European countries.

We expect issues to cause variation because different issues both challenge different aspects of inequality relations and possibly engage different sets of actors (Htun and Weldon 2010; Verloo 2006; Walby 2009). To study this *variation between different issues*, we are studying four issues that can be considered as subjects of classical feminist debates: two are about the division of labor (equal pay and equal treatment and reconciliation of work and family life), one about the organization of intimacy (reproduction, including abortion, and assisted reproduction), and domestic violence as an important issue of gender-based violence. We expect that gendered actors will be more salient in discussions around domestic violence (as this issue has been put on the political agenda by the feminist movement). And with regard to discussions about equal pay and equal treatment, we expect the European Union (EU) context of discrimination to include other grounds than "just" sex or gender. In that sense, we expect multiple inequalities to be more present in the latter policy field than in policies and debates on domestic violence. However, earlier research also shows that we can expect a tendency of degendering in the issue of domestic violence, with the focus on gender relations having shifted toward children and families (Verloo, Lombardo, and Bustelo 2007, 281). In such degendered domestic violence frames, neither victim nor perpetrator has an articulated sex or gender (Hagemann-White 2001; Krizsán et al. 2007, 148).

We expect *different types of texts* to cause variation in the use of gendered and intersectionalized social categories to the extent that they originate in actors with different positions in the policy-making process (government vs. civil society) and to the extent that they are binding or rather agenda-setting (laws vs. policy plans). Our analysis covers laws and policy plans, almost always from the national level, as well as civil society texts, mostly written by NGOs. Government texts are assumed to address a wide public and therefore could use unspecified categories more often. In contrast, as civil society texts can reflect the collective identity of the members of the NGOs that authored these texts, they can be expected to use more specified

social categories. Laws are generally considered to be more stable, long-term oriented, and binding, using legal categories that are not optional but obligatory (Barbou des Places 2008), whereas policy plans are generally not binding. Additionally, laws are by nature meant to regulate or (re)distribute, and therefore are predominantly prognosis oriented, while policy plans have more “freedom” to digress on problematizing and analyzing problems.

Our next section elaborates on the data and our methods of analysis. We will then first present our findings on the genderedness and intersectionality of the categories across issues, types of texts, diagnosis and prognosis, and across countries. Second, we explore the presence of two particular sets of actors: lesbian women, situated at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation, and minoritized women, situated at the intersection of gender and citizenship or race/ethnicity. Finally, we will draw conclusions on the gendered nature of categories in European gender equality policies and on the way intersectionality plays out in the diagnosis and prognosis concerning gender equality, also discussing the consequences for theory and further research.

Data and methods

This paper uses the coded versions of policy texts, called supertexts, from the QUING database,¹ which brings together 2088 documents addressing gender equality in the domains of polity, economy, intimate citizenship, and violence from the 27 EU member-state countries, candidate countries Croatia and Turkey, and the EU level in the period 1995–2007 (for a list of documents, see IWM 2007). These supertexts are based on critical frame analysis (Dombos et al. 2012; Verloo 2005), a methodology that aims to display the ways actors involved in policy-making frame issues as policy problems and the ways they formulate policy actions. Critical frame analysis builds on critical approaches to policy studies (Rein and Schön 1994) and social movement theory (Benford and Snow 2000) and has been used in gender studies to explore the discursive politics of gender equality (Lombardo, Meier, and Verloo 2009). The open coding of the policy documents according to standardized “sensitizing questions” (Verloo and Lombardo 2007), in which QUING researchers were asked to stay as close as possible to the original wording, enables us to follow an interpretive approach to category-making (Yanow 2000), as well as comparison across countries, issues, and types of documents. This study uses these data to focus on the meanings that the categories convey about who is represented to be a problem or in need of policy attention.

As a starting point for our analysis, we used the supertexts of three types of policy documents: laws, policy plans, and civil society texts. From those we selected one code from the diagnostic part of the text, referring to the represented problems (passive actor (PA)), and one code from the prognostic part of the text, referring to the proposed solutions to the problem (TG). The PA code item corresponds to that actor or institution that is considered to be suffering from a problem. The TG code item corresponds to actors that are targeted as subject in a policy action or that are supposed to benefit from the policy action. Texts may include multiple problems and policy solutions, resulting in several separate PAs and TGs per text. Because we are interested in social actors, we excluded categories referring to institutions, such as NGOs.

As we said earlier, we studied the gendered character of actors and the representation of intersectionality in the actor categories on four issues: pay gap and equal treatment, reconciliation, domestic violence, and (physical) reproduction. We selected these issues because they belong to four different domains (economy, polity, violence, and intimate citizenship) that could possibly have different legacies in constructing specific inequalities in specific ways (e.g. class for reconciliation or sexual orientation for reproduction). This resulted in two times 12 lists of codes for social actors (one list per issue and per type of text) for which we asked the following questions: (1) are the actors to whom the code is referring to only female/male? and (2) do gendered codes refer to any other main inequality axis, more specifically to (a) age, (b) minoritization, (c) class, (d) disability, or (e) sexual orientation?

In the second part of the paper, which focuses on lesbian women and minoritized women, we traced back in the database how often and in which countries government or civil society texts referred to these categories, and for which issues. For this analysis, we made use of an existing code hierarchy (Dombos et al. 2012), which enabled us to select a set of codes for social actors referring to gender (female) and either sexual orientation (lesbian) or minorization (gendered actors that are at the same time labeled in terms of their race, ethnicity, or citizenship status).

“Gender only” as a category in European gender equality policies

Gender equality policies can be expected to pay attention to gendered actors, but what kind of gendered actors? This section looks at a first possibility: a focus exclusively on gender, creating a unitary category of women (Hancock 2007), or a type of intersectionality-only that says gender only (Weldon 2006). In all four issues, we analyzed which laws, policy plans, and civil society texts articulated the gender dimension in their diagnosis and prognosis. Typical code words here are: woman, women, and female population or man, men, and male population. Table 1 summarizes our findings per issue. We present the analysis for diagnosis (PA) and prognosis (TG) separately. The numbers in the cells are number of countries (max. 29) plus EU (+1). The number of analyzed texts differs because in rare cases more than one text was included or in other cases a certain text did not exist in that particular country.

Table 1. Gender-only social actor codes per issue (number of countries).

Equal treatment/ equal pay	Law (35 texts)		Policy plan (32 texts)		Civil society (35 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Generic female	10	13	20	16	24	17
Generic male	4	10	5	8	6	11
Reconciliation	Law (42 texts)		Policy plan (30 texts)		Civil society (34 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Generic female	5	5	16	10	17	13
Generic male	1	3	5	7	9	8
Reproduction	Law (25 texts)		Policy plan (23 texts)		Civil society (32 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Generic female	3	6	7	6	15	10
Generic male	–	1	2	4	2	6
Domestic violence	Law (36 texts)		Policy plan (32 texts)		Civil society (36 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Generic female	5	3	15	11	21	14
Generic male	–	1	4	3	3	3

Across all types of texts and across issues, there are always a higher number of countries that pay attention to women as a generic category than to men as a generic category. For women, this varies between three countries (prognosis in law domestic violence and diagnosis in law reproduction) and 24 (diagnosis in civil society equal treatment and equal pay). For men this varies only between zero countries (diagnosis in law reproduction and domestic violence) and 11 (prognosis in civil society equal treatment and equal pay). Overall, there is a remarkable difference between generic gendered social actors in who is articulated as suffering from a problem and who is articulated as a TG for a policy action. This shows a different gender pattern in the diagnosis than in the prognosis. The generic category of women is more present in diagnoses than in prognoses, but when there *is* a focus on the generic category of men it is in the prognosis.

The texts, however, always still mention the generic category of women more than the generic category of men. This means there is only occasionally a focus on the problems that men might suffer from as a result of gender inequality, but a bit more attention to how men could contribute to or profit from the solution. Moreover, the presence of men is often mentioned in parallel to the generic category of women (only seven countries at some point mention men exclusively in diagnosis or prognosis), which downplays the problematization of men as such even more. We interpret such parallel use of generic categories as a way of “almost not gendering.”

We also find variation across types of texts and across issues. Overall, *laws* rarely address the generic categories of men or women. This is especially the case for TGs (with the exception of texts on equal treatment and equal pay, where the perspective on discrimination might cause a higher number of countries to include such categories, often male and female in parallel). This is in line with our expectations. Policy plans and civil society texts more often use generic categories of gendered social actors. *Policy plans* have more references to “men” or “women” than laws, especially when it comes to the diagnosis. One reason for this could be that policy plans are a softer type of text that also mention or list policy actions that are either less binding, experimental, or one-off. *Civil society texts* use the generic categories of men and women most frequently, compared to laws and policy plans regardless of issue focus. They also have the highest number of countries (more than half of the countries when diagnosis and prognosis are taken together) that refer to generic gender categories. Still, this also means that many gender equality civil society texts do not mention generic gender categories. In line with the overall findings, we see more references to the generic category of women than of men. Yet, among civil society texts on reconciliation almost one-third of the countries mentions “men” in diagnosis and in prognosis, and almost one-third of the countries mentions them as a TG in equal treatment and equal pay civil society texts. Regarding types of texts, we thus conclude that reference to generic gender actors is quite common in civil society texts and a bit less so in policy plans, but rather rare in laws, except when these are about equal treatment and equal pay.

There are large differences between issues. We see the highest numbers of countries referring to generic gender actors in either diagnosis or prognosis on the topics of equal treatment and equal pay (13-20-24), followed by reconciliation (5-16-17) and domestic violence (5-15-21), while texts on reproduction show the lowest occurrence of these categories (6-7-15). When we compare issues per type of text, we find that policy texts and civil society texts on equal treatment and equal pay more often use references to generic gender actors, while especially policy and civil society texts on reproduction use such references less often.

Intersectional categories in diagnosis and prognosis

The previous section showed the frequency of references to generic gender actors across issues and types of texts. By taking another approach to the main question, this section looks at which other inequality axes are addressed in gender equality policies, analyzing gendered social actors that are

also intersectionalized. Table 2 summarizes which and how many countries refer to which intersectional actors in the analyzed texts. The five inequality axes that are considered here are: age, minoritization (be it on the basis of origin, citizenship status, race, ethnicity, or color), class (education, economic status), disability, or sexual orientation. The ♂ and ♀ signs are used to specify the gendered nature of the references. Codes for countries are international standards.

Table 2. Intersectional category codes per issue (number of countries).

Equal treatment/equal pay	Law (35 texts)		Policy plan (32 texts)		Civil society (35 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Age	–	–	♀ 5 ♂ 1	♀ 6	♀ 7	♀ 4 ♂ 1
Minoritization	–	–	♀ 2	♀ 2 ♂ 1	♀ 1	♀ 1
Class	♀ 1 ♂ 1	–	–	♀ 1	♀ 4	♀ 4
Disability	–	–	–	–	–	–
Sexual orientation	–	–	–	–	♀ 3 ♂ 3	–
Reconciliation	Law (42 texts)		Policy plan (30 texts)		Civil society (34 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Age	–	–	♀ 2 ♂ 1	♀ 2	♀ 2	–
Minoritization	–	–	♀ 2	♀ 2	♀ 2	♀ 1
Class	–	♀ 1	♀ 3	♀ 2	♀ 7	–
Disability	–	♀ 1	–	♀ 2	♀ 1	–
Sexual orientation	–	–	–	–	♀ 2 ♂ 1	♀ 1 ♂ 1
Reproduction	Law (25 texts)		Policy plan (23 texts)		Civil society (32 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Age	–	–	♀ 2	♀ 1	♀ 1	♀ 2
Minoritization	–	–	♀ 2	♀ 2	–	♀ 1
Class	♀ 1	–	♀ 1	–	♀ 2	♀ 1
Disability	–	–	–	–	♀ 1	–
Sexual orientation	♀ 1	♀ 1	♀ 1	♀ 1	♀ 3	♀ 3
Domestic violence	Law (36 texts)		Policy plan (32 texts)		Civil society (36 texts)	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Age	–	–	♀ 6 ♂ 1	♀ 4 ♂ 1	♀ 2	–
Minoritization	–	–	♀ 4	♀ 6	♀ 3	♀ 3
Class	–	–	♀ 2	–	–	–
Disability	–	–	♀ 1	–	♀ 2	♀ 1
Sexual orientation	–	–	♀ 1	–	–	–

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A first observation is that very few intersectionalized actors appear in the analyzed texts. For any set of texts on any of the four issues analyzed in diagnosis and prognosis, we find at most six to seven countries that refer to gendered intersectionalized actors. At the same time, except for Slovakia, all other 28 countries and the EU level made reference to some gendered intersectional category. Six countries had just one or two references (Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Luxembourg, and Slovenia). The countries that have slightly higher numbers of references to gendered intersectional actors are Germany (14; 6 in governmental texts), the Netherlands (11; 8 in governmental texts), Poland (10; 4 in governmental texts), Sweden (8; 6 in governmental texts), Turkey (9; 5 in governmental texts), and the EU (11; 5 in EU texts).

In line with our findings in the previous section, most intersectional categories concern female actors. There is almost no mention of male intersectionalized actors. Rare references to them are only found in six countries and one EU civil society text. There is no reference at all in the texts on reproduction, just a single mention of the term “boys” in one Swedish and one German policy plan on domestic violence, a reference in a Maltese policy plan on reconciliation that remarks on a conflict of values about combining paid work and care where older men are seen to be suffering from this change in values, and a few more references in texts on equal treatment and equal pay, but these are mostly cases in which women and men are both mentioned in parallel as potentially suffering from discrimination or problematic access to services. In equal treatment and equal pay, however, we find two texts where intersectionalized male actors are addressed on their own. The first is a French civil society text in which the author, Mix-Cité, argues that boy pupils need to be sensitized to gender-equal pay in professional schools. The second is a Dutch policy plan on equal pay stating that migrant men (“allochthonous men”) suffer from a pay-gap difference in comparison to non-migrant men (“autochthonous men”). For male actors, the intersections most mentioned are age (four countries) and sexual orientation (in the EU, Germany, Ireland, and Malta, but mostly in the context of discrimination and as a parallel to a female category). Minoritization and class are just addressed by a single country (the Netherlands and Lithuania, respectively) and disability intersected by male gender by no country at all.

Another observation, again similar to the previous section’s findings, is that the different types of texts and the diagnoses and prognoses in these texts generate different numbers of references to gendered intersectional actors. There are very few references in laws, regardless of the issue, and this does not differ between diagnosis and prognosis. Both policy plans and civil society texts have a few more references to gendered intersectional actors. These references are typically found more in diagnoses than in prognoses, although the difference is rather small. There is also one particular configuration in which policy plans and civil society texts differ. In the policy plans, a higher number of countries refer to age or to actors related to minoritization (31 and 23 references), while in the civil society texts a higher number of countries mention actors differentiated along class or sexual orientation dimensions (18 and 12 references). Looking at the overall pattern of differentiated attention for the five inequality axes that we considered, age clearly tops the list, followed by minoritization and class in almost equal numbers, with fewer references to gendered actors related to sexual orientation and almost none related to disability. When taking a closer look at different patterns for the four issues, we see that most references are situated in equal treatment and equal pay (44), and just a bit fewer both in reconciliation and in domestic violence texts (34 and 35). The attention for gendered intersectional actors is lowest in texts on reproduction (28).

The attention for the five inequality axes is also not spread evenly across the issues: age dominates in equal treatment and equal pay, minoritization in domestic violence texts, class in reconciliation, and sexual orientation in reproduction. For the inequality axis on sexual orientation, it is remarkable that all countries that reference this axis in the issue of reproduction have either opened heterosexual marriage to homosexual couples or have a substitute for this in their

legislation (Austria, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, and Sweden – data from ILGA website: <http://ilga.org/ilga/en/organisations/ILGA%20EUROPE>).

While these findings are to be treated with extreme caution because the numbers are so low that another selection of texts might give different results, the pattern here seems to follow a logic that would merit further exploration. This logic would match the expectations we formulated in our introduction that different issues challenge different aspects of inequality relations and may involve different sets of actors.

Situating specific intersectional categories in gender equality policies

After sketching the general picture concerning intersectionality in the section above, we will now zoom in on two particular categories within the Russian doll and discuss the presence of “lesbian women” and “minoritized women” in policy and civil society texts in Europe. Our analysis shows which inequalities experienced by, or attributed to, this specified category are addressed by government or non-government actors. Which countries articulate the intersection between gender and sexual orientation or gender and race/ethnicity/citizenship status? Are these particular intersectionalized categories present in particular policy fields or particular texts and absent in others?

Lesbian women in European gender equality policies

Across all four issues and the laws, policy plans, and civil society texts in the database, the intersection of gender and sexual orientation is found in 106 of the 1881 texts that explicitly refer to gender at any point. In almost all cases this is a reference to the intersection of female gender and sexual orientation (103 of the 106 texts). In rare cases this is a reference to heterosexuality and female gender (six texts). There are references to male gender and sexual orientation too, but only in 30 of these texts (almost always in parallel with lesbian women). After this general overview, we will now zoom in on the category of actors that refer to the intersection of female gender and homosexual orientation (Table 3).

Across all issues, most references are found in texts on intimate citizenship. Next, some countries have references in texts on general gender equality (national equality plans or texts about national machinery). As texts on violence or on non-employment (reconciliation, equal treatment and equal pay, or tax benefits and care work) have very rare references, these results imply that the intersection of gender and sexual orientation is mostly constructed as relevant for issues of relationship, sexuality, reproduction, and parenting. While this is obviously a crucial domain for gendered sexual equality, the almost universal absence of lesbian women in texts dealing with issues of discrimination at work or in work-related regulations, gender violence, or violence in lesbian relationships is striking.

In laws, the exception to the dominant reference to intimate citizenship is Ireland, where the Equality Act 2004 makes reference to gay women (in a long parallel list of potentially discriminated people). The references to intimate citizenship from Spain and Slovenia are about partnership and marriage, in Finland and Sweden about fertility treatment, and for Greece about cohabitation, recognizing that lesbian gay bisexual transgender (LGBT) people do not have equal rights under the law. Five of the seven texts refer to female gender and sexual orientation in the diagnosis and three in the prognosis.

In policy plans, the references to female gender and sexual orientation are also found in texts on other issues. In Italy and Sweden, there are references in the field of violence against women that explicitly include lesbian women as suffering from reduction of freedom (Italy) or potentially needing places in sheltered housing (Sweden, with a focus on young lesbian women). The Maltese text refers to sexual harassment, mentioning homosexual men and lesbians in parallel

Table 3. References to lesbian women per issue (diagnosis/prognosis and country).

	Law		Policy plan		Civil society	
Number of texts referring to lesbian women	7		14		46	
Gender-based violence	Diagnosis	Prognosis	Diagnosis	Prognosis	Diagnosis	Prognosis
			1	2	1	1
General gender equality	1		IT	MT-SE	FR	UK
			2	3	4	2
	IE		CZ-IT	CZ-HU-UK	AT-FR-HU-IE	AT-HU
Non-employment					1	2
					MT	EU-MT
Intimate citizenship	3	2	6	4	17	14
	ES-GR-SE-	FI-SI	AT-ES-IE-SE-SK-UK	ES-FI-IE-SK	AT-CY-DE-DK-ES-EU-GR-HR-HU-IE-MT-NL-PT-RO-SE-SK-TR	CY-DK-ES-EU-GR-HR-HU-IE-MT-NL-RO-SE-SK-TR

as having to file a complaint when harassed. In Czech Republic, Hungary, Finland, Italy, and the UK, there are references of general gender equality referring to potential stereotyping (CZ), discrimination, assault or harassment, or to past policy actions that have provided protection against discrimination (UK). There are no references found in policy plans on reconciliation, care work, or tax-benefit policies related to work and family. Policy plans predominantly make reference to intimate citizenship issues, mostly related to partnership (Austria, Spain, Ireland, Slovakia, and the UK). The policy plans from Sweden and Finland are concerned with assisted reproduction technologies and the access for lesbian women. Though neither comes directly from a national ministry,² the Spanish and Slovak texts are very articulated, both texts providing a more holistic or comprehensive analysis, referring to unequal rights for both lesbian women and homosexual men as expressed in many domains of societies, such as employment, sports, public spaces, housing, and health. Some policy plans refer to actors at the intersection of gender and sexual orientation only in their diagnosis, highlighting problems for these actors, while some only list what needs to be done and a few (Czech Republic, Spain, and Slovakia) include both diagnostic and prognostic elements.

The civil society texts have many more references, but the main focus again is on intimate citizenship issues, particularly partnership and marriage or fertility and assisted reproduction. The texts that refer to gender-based violence are very few, and concern access to information (UK), and the motivation of sexual harassers (France). The texts on general gender equality articulate a more comprehensive problematization of inequality related to sexual orientation in a context that still lacks knowledge or acceptance (Austria) or specify that men discriminate specific groups of women such as lesbians (but also migrant and disabled women) (France). Hungary and Ireland include lesbians in a long list of women who face multiple disadvantages and need special protection by the state. The Maltese text addresses Malta's failure to properly

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implement the European Commission (EC) directive on discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and very comprehensively analyzes the consequences of this failure for homosexuals, including lesbians. The EU-level European Women's Lobby text on reconciliation is the only one to address parental rights, asking for reform of partnership custody laws to cover homosexual parent rights but not specifically those of lesbians. In most cases, the articulation of the diagnosis is more comprehensive than it is in laws or policy plans (except the regional Spanish and Slovak policy plan texts). These texts first articulate why and how marriage inequality is a problem or a violation of human rights and then propose actions. When the focus is on reproduction, the inequality in access to assisted reproduction techniques (be it legal, financial, or other kinds of access) is exposed and action is demanded to remedy this inequality. Overall, references to lesbian women in civil society texts are found in both diagnostic and prognostic sections. Especially in texts on partnership, marriage, or reproduction (where so many of the problems are about unequal rights or unequal access), most include articulation of problems as well as proposals for action.

Where the previous paragraphs addressed all direct references to lesbian women, they did not take into account which other actors are referenced. Yet, taking a look at these configurations of actors, it is striking that almost all reference lesbian women and gay men in parallel (with variation as to whether other sexual minority categories, such as bisexual women and men, and transsexuals or transgender persons, are also mentioned). The oft-used label of (GLB) gay lesbian bisexual or LGBT is one form of this parallel use. We believe this indicates that cases foregrounding sexual orientation often simultaneously degender the issue. Mentioning lesbian women in such a configuration amounts to a sexual orientation-only focus. There is only one exception to this parallel mentioning, one specific intersectional problematization related to lesbian women: problems related to fertility and technologies to enable lesbian women to get pregnant and bear children. This is about access to assisted reproduction or to the legal settings that enable lesbian couples to both be legal parents of their child(ren). For gay men, the one specific problematization is about access and acceptance into the army (Cyprus). Both cases accentuate the biological dimension of identity.

Analyzing what other intersections are addressed within the category of lesbian women, we see that students and older lesbians are the two intra-categories that are somewhat further intersectionalized. Mainly there is more generic mentioning of lesbian women, lesbian citizens, lesbian communities, lesbian members of society, or lesbian people. When lesbians are included as just a letter in phrases such as GLB or LGBT, there are more differentiations, as LGBT people or persons can also be: clients, patients, students, teachers, with handicap, with need for care, chronically ill, minority groups, victim, older, young athletes, or ethnic or religious groups dealing with banishment.

In conclusion, we want to briefly reflect on the absences that this presence implies. The predominant focus on intimate citizenship issues such as marriage, partnership, and assisted reproduction means that there is a predominant absence of issues of violence, non-employment, and general gender equality. While the presence we found can be said to reflect how sexual inequality is often understood and presented in the LGBT movement (Verloo 2006), this obscures that many policies on non-employment – mainly as a consequence of legal regulations of partnership – affect lesbian families differently than they affect heterosexual families. In order to qualify for parental leave as the non-birth giving parent, for instance, you need to be recognized as a parent first. The same reasoning applies for many tax benefits linked to the division of work and care. Similarly, in order to find good support in cases of domestic violence, it matters whether the relationship in which this violence occurred is heterosexual or lesbian. The absences here show that more attention can and possibly should be paid to the specific needs of lesbian women in many more policy fields than where we now find them.

Minoritized women

Immigration and integration are important policy issues on the agenda of the EC and many European Governments. Across Europe, policies on the entire spectrum of issues concerning immigration and integration have become restrictive, and this is especially true for non-European migrants. Additionally, we see an unequal attribution of problems to “Others in Europe,” which has led to an ethnicization of policy issues (Bonjour, Rea, and Jacobs 2011). In this section, we will study the extent to which this ethnicized policy attention materializes in the analyzed texts’ category-making. More specifically, we focus on the presence and absence of female actors who are at the same time labeled in terms of their race, ethnicity, or citizenship status. We will use the term “minoritized women” to capture the variety of labels used across European countries to define particular residents as different from the majority group in that country on the basis of their origin, physical appearance (such as skin color), and/or citizenship status. Even though in many, especially western European, countries “othering” is primarily used in the context of immigration, we will also include non-migrant or national minorities in our analysis. As in our first two empirical sections, we looked at categories in diagnosis and prognosis for three types of texts, but, as with the analysis for lesbian women, we now included *all* possible issues from the QUING database.

Of all laws, policy plans, and civil society documents that use gendered categories in their diagnosis or prognosis, only a fairly small number refers to actors at the intersection with origin, physical appearance, or citizenship status (see first row in Table 4). This pattern is similar to what we found earlier for intersectionalized gendered actors. Again, most intersectionalized gender categories refer to women, but only occasionally to men. Second, and in line with a finding in the section on lesbian women, most labels address minoritized gendered actors and only a small number of categories refer to the majority group of women. In many cases women’s migrant background is highlighted. We often see that the undifferentiated term “migrant women” or “women from ethnic minority groups” is used, or specific groups are mentioned corresponding to the country’s immigration history. Categories referring to national minorities are less common; the presence of these categories, most often referring to Roma women (Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania) or traveler women (Ireland), seems to be region specific (reflecting that these minorities are on the political radar, as many other countries have these minorities as well).

Explicit reference to the intersection gender and minoritization is rare in laws, although the term “female marriage migrants” in a Dutch law on family reunification is an example. In contrast, policy plans contain many more references to minoritized women and civil society texts the most. Civil society texts tend to more often use these specified categories in their diagnosis, whereas in policy plans we see them more often in the prognostic part of the text. This means that the civil society texts highlight the problems that these women face, whereas policy texts focus more on them as TGs.

When we look at the results at the country level, we see that the EU and more than two-thirds of the 29 countries use the category of minoritized women at least in one type of text. More than one-third of the countries (and the EU) refer to these intersectionalized actors both in policy plans and civil society texts. Apparently, both civil society actors and policy-makers recognize this group of women as suffering from particular problems or in need of policy action. Policy plans refer to minoritized women slightly more often as TGs, whereas civil society texts more often address them in their diagnostic sections. These references are found in Belgium, Germany, France, and the Netherlands – four of the Northwestern European countries that after World War II received post-colonial migrants and male labor migrants followed by the family reunification migration of their women and children. We also find a number of countries on Europe’s periphery (Spain, Italy, Ireland, and Lithuania), all countries in the frontline of

Table 4. References to minoritized women per issue (PA/TG and country).

	Law		Policy plan		Civil society	
	PA	TG	PA	TG	PA	TG
Texts referring to gender, citizenship, and ethnicity/all texts with gendered categories	1/84	14/155	26/202	27/186	40/277	20/212
References to minoritized women	1 NL	2 BG-NL	13 BE-CZ-DE- DK-ES- EU-FR- HU-IE- IT-NL- PL-SE	16 BE-BG-CY- CZ-DE- DK-EU- FR-HR- HU-IE-LT- NL-PL-RO- SE	16 AT-CY-CZ- DE-ES- EU-FR- HU-IT-LT- PL-PT-RO- SK-TR-UK	10 BE-CY- DE- EU-FR- HU-IE- NL- RO-UK
Issue: Gender-based violence			7 BE-DE- DK-FR- IE-NL- PL	8 BE-DE-DK- EU-FR- HR-IE-NL	12 AT-CY-DE- ES-EU-FR- IT-PL-PT- SK-TR-UK	5 BE-DE- FR-NL- UK
Issue: General gender equality	1 NL	1 NL	5 CZ-EU-FR- NL-SE	8 CZ-DK-FR- NL-PL-RO- SE	8 ES-EU-FR- HU-IT-LT- NL-RO	6 EU-FR- HU-IE- NL-RO
Issue: Non-employment		1 BG	3 ES-HU-NL	4 CY-HU-NL- RO	6 CY-CZ-ES- FR-IT-NL	4 CY-EU- IE-NL
Issue: Intimate citizenship		1 NL	2 EU-FR	4 BG-FR-LT- NL	4 DE-EU-NL- UK	2 DE-EU

(unwanted) migration. A third set of countries is eastern European (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, and Romania). Texts from Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania all address Roma women and the various inequalities these women face. Both Polish texts address women from the former Soviet Union and neighboring countries east of Poland in the context of trafficking. These differences between countries suggest that specific contexts generate specific attention for subcategories of minoritized women. It remains unclear whether this indicates serious attention for real problems this group faces or whether this frames them as essentially problematic.

Gender-based violence is by far the most prominent issue that addresses minoritized women (16 countries and the EU for at least one of the three types of texts). This corresponds to what we found earlier in the section on intersectional categories. Our analysis shows that minoritized women are mentioned as suffering from domestic violence, and more than other women, from so-called culturally specific types of oppression (such as forced marriage, honor-related violence, and female genital mutilation), sexual exploitation, and trafficking. In texts on gender-based violence, eight (mostly western European) countries and the EU address this group in policy plans and civil society actors from 13 countries or from the level of the EU do so as well. For texts on general gender equality, there are 13 countries and the EU often dealing with discrimination and unequal access. Again, migrant women are most often mentioned here, but also Roma women, for example. A Czech policy plan on equal opportunities mentions as one of the 20 problems

discussed in the diagnostic part, the involuntary sterilizations among these women as being one of the most significant racial discrimination complaints. For equal pay and equal treatment, the number of countries that address this specific group of women in at least one of the three types of texts is lower (nine countries and the EU) and for intimate citizenship it is the lowest (six countries and the EU).

Although we found a low number of references to the lesbian women category in gender equality texts from governments and civil society, minoritized women are much more commonly present. This might partly be explained by the politicization of particular female migrants' disadvantaged position; Muslim migrant women have especially become emblematic in discussions on migration and integration that took place throughout Europe in the studied period.

Conclusion

In our contribution to research on category-making in gender equality policies, we have studied the frequency and spread of gendered and intersectionalized social actors in laws, policy plans, and civil society texts (from the QUING database) across different issues and European countries. As expected, we found that many gender equality texts indeed refer to gendered actors in their diagnosis and prognosis. Most frequently they refer to a generic gender category, mostly women, and more so in policy plans and civil society documents than in laws. We found that parallel use of both generic female and male categories amounts to an almost not gendering.

However, in contrast to the significant presence of such generic gendered actors, the occurrence of more specifically intersectionalized gender categories is rather low. We found that intersectionalized actors appear in the analyzed texts very little and there is almost no mention of male intersectionalized actors (or any other intersectionally privileged groups). The different types of texts generate different numbers of references to gendered intersectional actors, and the presence of intersectional gender actors in diagnoses is a bit higher than in prognoses. There are very few references in laws, regardless of the issue. Age tops the list of differentiated attention for inequality axes, followed by minoritization and class in almost equal numbers, with fewer references to gendered actors related to sexual orientation and almost none related to disability. Regarding the four issues, most references can be found in equal treatment and equal pay, with just a bit fewer both in reconciliation and in domestic violence texts, while the attention for gendered intersectional actors is lowest in the issue of reproduction. Confirming our expectations that different texts and different issues result in different attentions for intersectionality in gender equality policies, the attention for the five inequality axes we considered is not spread evenly across the issues: age dominates in equal treatment and equal pay, minoritization in domestic violence texts, class in reconciliation, and sexual orientation in reproduction.

A closer analysis of two particular gendered intersectionalized categories showed a different pattern, however. The analysis of the position of lesbian women shows a prominent articulation in issues of intimate citizenship, while the analysis of minoritized women shows a dominant accent on violence issues. While this might be unsurprising in view of actual political debates across Europe on same-sex marriage and adoption or on culturalized forms of violence, we want to emphasize that these are by no means the only problems that lesbian or minoritized women in Europe face. In other words, the policies that address them only narrowly cover their potential interests.

Moreover, the accent on violence issues for minoritized women resonates all too well with the culturalized stigmatization of migrants in right-wing politics. As we do not see such resonance for the dominance of intimate citizenship for lesbian women, the particular use of minoritized women as a category in laws, policy plans, and civil society texts remains potentially much more reifying and stigmatizing than the use of the category of lesbian women.

Our analysis cannot solve the question whether specifying and intersectionalizing actors enables us to address problems resulting from interfering power dynamics or whether that actually increases the danger of reification and stigmatization for certain social categories. Reification, stereotyping, and stigmatization may follow generic gender categorization as much as specified intersectionalized categorization does, because these processes do not only rely on the level of detail in the labeling of social actors. Our conclusion is rather that this depends on the categorization itself and how it resonates with existing stigmas and inequalities, and with actors eager to exploit or counteract this resonance. For that matter, from the perspective of substantive representation, a more in-depth analysis of policy texts combined with an analysis of the positions taken by strong oppositional and advocacy actors should reveal the implications of the highlighting or “silencing” (Yanow 2003, 15) of particular identities in particular policy fields for situations of structural gender⁺ inequality.

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Notes

1. The QUING research project was financed under the sixth framework program of the EC. See www.quing.eu.
2. The Spanish text is a Catalan policy plan, the Slovak text is a text from the National Center for Human Rights, an institution partly established according to the anti-discrimination law.

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