

Challenges for intersectionality in the transnational organization of European equality movements: Forming Platforms and maintaining turf in today's European Union

For:

Gender Orders Unbound: Towards new reciprocity and solidarity

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Leverkusen-Opladen : Barbara Budrich Verlag

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The European Commission claims that the introduction of Article 13 in the European Community Treaty represented “a quantum leap forward in the fight against discrimination” (European Commission COM (2005(a)) 225 final pp. 14-15). The Article prohibits discrimination on the basis of 6 grounds (sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation) and was the result of intensive lobbying by transnational actors representing the groups which led to a paradigm shift (Geddes and Guiraudon 2004) in EU policy making using the anti-discrimination frame. However the shift in policy to looking at many grounds for discrimination is not necessarily reflected in a shift on the ground in terms of social movements and scholarship. Academic literatures on sexuality, gender and race do not always speak to each other. Recent evidence also indicates that on issues of gender, sexuality and race, movements at the most local level also have difficulties speaking to each other or sharing each other's priorities. Such difficulties in getting to know each other are multiplied when it comes to collaborating across national borders, bringing the substantial

transaction costs that Imig and Tarrow (2000) predicted could hamper European transnational action and coalition formation.

The equality movement that seems to have been most successful in forging cross-border alliances and achieving policy change has been the gender equality movement. The achievements of European Women's Movement organizations in changing perceptions and expectations and legislation for women are widely lauded and credited in part with opening the door for other equality issues in Europe. Ron Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2003) argue that the public acceptance of gender equality as a norm is the cutting point between different civilisations in the world. The European acceptance of egalitarianism between the sexes is the most successful revolution of the twentieth century. Imig and Tarrow (2000) and Justin Greenwood (2003), a scholar on European interest groups, call the Women's Movement the most successful of the European social issue lobbyists. Tariq Moddod believes that at least some of the *current Muslim assertiveness is a politics of catching up with gender equality and feminist achievements* (2005:20).

Yet today the gender movement and its issues are sometimes considered to be passé. Other issues covered by the Anti-Discrimination Article 13, such as racial and ethnic inequalities are now on the center stage as the burning political issues in Europe. European ministers for gender equality are often male or without a feminist track record. The Dutch Emancipation minister recently claimed that equality for women had been achieved, and so he could dispense with that part of his job and work on more pressing inequalities and Poland abolished the position of Minister for Equality between men and women after the 2006 elections. What seems ironic is that the success of the women's movement at national and at transnational level in achieving some public acceptance of gender equality and in forging transnational alliances are frequently ignored by those working on these other discrimination issues, even as the historical record indicates that feminist theory and women's activists have been concerned about intersecting inequalities and discriminations for years. Two recent basic books on immigration by top scholars have virtually no references to gender issues (Schierup, et. al. (2006) and Koopmans, et. al (2005) despite

the fact that gender forms a key issue in many of the social conflicts around migrant/and new citizen integration such as head scarves, honor killings and young male crime. That migrants have a biological sex, that family reunification involves gender relations, that women and men move for different reasons with different projects, and that victimization is more likely to have a gendered face, let alone the gendered aspects of citizenship regimes, seems in these two randomly chosen recent books to be irrelevant. There are many lessons to be shared but the policy communities dealing with different forms of inequality seem frequently unaware of the contributions of other social movements. New developments brought about by the changing legislative and political context present significant challenges for those who think that the present gender order in Europe is far from fixed and gender equality still a distant dream. Gender equality organizations in many countries will have to reconstitute themselves to operate effectively as an interest group in the new terrain.

The concern here is the issues raised by transnational and trans-issue coalitions for the gender order in a European context. To what extent do new groupings provide potential for further gains? Specifically, will the cross-cutting equal opportunity group that women form gradually be pressed out of its earlier relatively favored status without achieving its ultimate goal of parity in access and receipt of social and economic welfare? Or is it the case that the new configurations of the European Union offer unknown possibilities for policy inventiveness that can be enhanced by cooperation between gender theorists and social movement activists? This chapter outlines the shifts in the landscape of civil society representation and voice in Europe and their implications particularly for gender and sexuality equality activists, although groups working on racial discrimination were also consulted. It is based on research on the interactions and coalition forming at the local (Belgian/Flemish) level and the transnational level in the European Union in Brussels (Godemont & Motmans 2005, Wiercx and Woodward 2004, Woodward 2006, s'Jegers 2005). Informants were asked in 2005-2006 to describe the major changes in the political and policy landscape since the passage of the Treaty of Amsterdam and the extent to which they cooperate and form

coalitions with other groups¹. The chapter describes five changes in the European political landscape that affect gender equality actors. It outlines the challenges to address cross-cutting identities and achieve an egalitarian society with solidarity across identities and social positions. A key issue is the emergence of meta-platforms on social issues, grouping together different identity target-groups. Cross-issue grouping raises significant questions for gender activists who claim that gender identification is cross-cutting and universal. Grouping all equality issues together thus has ramifications for the women's movement, demanding a more explicit recognition of cross-cutting identity diversity in the gender order. Implicitly, if not explicitly, the background for the changing landscape of gender equality battles is a global one, with links from the most miniscule grass root in a local village to the halls of international discourse in Brussels or Beijing. The shifts in framing and discourse are stimulated by civil society entrepreneurs at all levels, but the results are not always propitious for every actor. The chapter concludes with suggestions for the mobilization of feminist theory to provide new policy pathways.

1. The impact of Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty and the new directives on structures and actors

Civil society actors concerned with equality issues galvanized in the run up to the adaptation of the Amsterdam Treaty, and the process also set the frame for the following decade (Bell 2005, Lombardo 2005, Williams 2003). While gender equality has had pride of place in the social face of Europe, the Treaty of Amsterdam provided grounds for fighting discrimination, equal treatment and pro-active measures for 5 other social equality issues, (sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation) which were also in many

¹ Wiercx and Woodward (2004) is based on a social network and strategy survey of 25 European and 51 Flemish organizations including the major umbrella organizations on sexuality and gender issues. S'jegers 2005 utilizes qualitative data on the relations between the Flemish platforms for migrant integration and the women's umbrella organizations. Godemont and Motmans (2005) concluded focus group interviews with Flemish gender and sexuality activists in 2005 while Woodward (2006) and

cases new topics (Lewis 1999). Article 13 brought formally into the circle of social equality politics *new actors* and also *new structures*. The continuing European integration process also saw equality issues extending beyond the Commission Directorate General for Employment and Social Affairs and over to other sectors such as the Directorate General for Justice and Home Affairs with the discussion of the establishment of a new agency for Fundamental Rights in Europe (European Commission Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Unit D.3, 2005(b) p. 5). For gender equality and sexual orientation equality civil society organizations, pro-active monitoring was a necessity to see that their topics did not get lost in the competition with new target groups and new points of entry into European Policy.

The Commission itself was astounded by the speed in which implementation instruments for Article 13 were adopted, writing that

On the basis of this Article, the European community adopted unanimously and in record time a comprehensive package consisting at that time of two Directives (Racial Equality - Council Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 and Employment Equality - Council Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000) and a Community Action program. ...More recently the Council adopted legislation in relation to gender (Directive 2004/113/EC) implementing the principle of equal treatment between women and men in the access to and supply of goods and services.' (European Commission COM(2005(a))225 final pp. 14-15).

Several interviewees found one unintended result of the implementation of Article 13 and the new Directives on Race, Equal Treatment and Goods and Services to be that gender issues have become less central or have disappeared. A structural battle that had a mixed outcome was the localization of the gender equality policy issues after the Treaty. A Fundamental

ongoing is based on qualitative interviews with 20 policy specialists from transnational equality organizations and the European Commission carried out in 2005 and 2006.

Rights and Anti-Discrimination Unit was set up in DG Employment and Social Affairs, but the Equality between Men and Women Unit fought successfully for its independent survival. The outcome was that 'gender/biological sex' was the only issue *not* being explicitly dealt with by the anti-discrimination unit. The Migration Policy Group and Human European Consultancy have established and manage, for the European Commission, a Network of independent legal experts in the non-discrimination field that provides independent information and advice on the implementation of the Article 13 anti-discrimination Directives in all 25 Member States. *'The network, 25 country experts for each EU Member State, is run by a management team led by Human European Consultancy and the Migration Policy Group and consisting of a scientific Board of Directors and five ground coordinators each covering one discrimination ground* (Information page consulted 5 aug 2006 <http://www.migpolgroup.com/topics/2077.html> Migration Policy Group) but not including gender. The Anti-discrimination Unit in DG Employment also lacked an explicit gender expert. The argument in both cases was that 'women' were covered by the equal opportunity unit.

The trade union informant commented that they were very happy with Article 13, because it gave a basis for further action and activity, but that because of it, there has been a shift of attention from the European Commission towards other areas of equality. This is also reflected in the composition of the Commissioner's Group on equality issues. Under the Santer Commission a standing group of commissioners was initiated to monitor issues of Equality between Men and Women. With the Barosso Commission, this group has now become the Group of Commissioners on Fundamental Rights, Anti-discrimination and Equal Opportunities, a much broader agenda, in which gender issues form only one part which are treated explicitly once a year.

These developments indicate a pressure to have a joined up approach to equality. The United Kingdom and Ireland had had experience with bureaucratic services dealing with

different grounds for discrimination, and this model could be used to cover all the groups named in Article 13. The approach of using one service to cover all groups seems to be increasingly being adopted, even if some informants felt there is more talk about 'joined-up approaches' than actual success. The countries that have adopted a joined up approach in implementing Article 13, particularly in the creation of a bureaucracy to deal with discrimination complaints were initially the exception (8 of 25) (European Industrial Relations Review, 2003), but it does seem to be a growing trend (European Commission Directorate General Employment and Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Unit D.3 2005 (b) p.23-24.) The network of these equality bodies, including bodies on gender equality is also coordinated by the Migration Policy Group. In recent research this network, EQUINET, the European Network of Equality bodies, constituted at the end of 2004 has begun to address the proactive possibilities of Article 13 to not only help victims of discrimination, but also actively work to change policies before they are implemented, in a stance similar to that used in gender equality, through mainstreaming checks and other pro-active policy instruments. This is called the 'positive duties' of the law. (Griffiths 2006) However, informant interviews indicated that even in countries where a joined up strategy is far advanced, such as the U.K. there are significant tensions.

The result of the legislative changes for equality movement actors has been an expansion of policy making interfaces at various levels of the EU and also in the nation state. In Europe a number of states have increasingly introduced regional layers of governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001), so that governance interfaces have expanded and each level may have a responsibility for equal opportunities. Thus there has been a palpable spread and institutionalization of equal opportunity policy machinery (usually initially established for women's issues) in European member states and their regions. Another result has been an increase in the number of contenders for consideration in the equality cake. For example, an increasing public understanding of sexual orientation issues allows for more open organization and the collective presentation of demands for recognition and for protection

(Duyvendak 1994, Chabot and Duyvendak 2002, Elman 2000, 2002, Waites 2001) and as noted above, groups addressing the issue of migration and racial diversity have appeared (Geddes 2000, Guiraudon 2000), and also make claims for the entire cake of discrimination issues without necessarily taking on board the issues of gender.

2. *The Enlargement of the European Union May 1 2004*

The players in civil society substantially changed with the accomplishment of enlargement of the European Union to 25 member states. In many equality organizations the next new members including Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey and Croatia are also included in meetings and discussions. Since the main civil society actors on sexuality and gender such as the International Lesbian and Gay Alliance- Europe (ILGA) and the European Women's Lobby (EWL) attempt to represent interests throughout the European Union, finding affiliates in the new countries demanded major efforts. The European trade union women's commission also enlarged their representation. In terms of issue alliances, the enlargement was a challenge for both the women's movement and the Gays and Lesbians, as many of the enlargement countries have few feminist women's organizations, and/or have public cultures that are openly negative to sexuality rights movements. The reports on the adoption of the Community *acquis* around equality between men and women have indicated a lack of understanding of gender and sexuality issues on the part of some of the new member states (Sloat 2004, Bretherton 2001, Braithwaite 2005) ILGA members have also widely communicated the persecution of public demonstration in support of sexual rights and freedoms. (ILGA Europe 2004) In terms of representation, therefore, the New Europe presents significant challenges for gender and sexuality movements that may sap their energy from tasks that were earlier priorities. However, the European Women's Lobby was seen by other civil society actors as a front runner because they had been running workshops and bringing women's activists to Brussels for training for several years before

the enlargement. The European Women's Lobby commented that the new members provided a challenge but also important fresh blood, being younger and less patient than the large established membership in Old Europe.

3. The Political Context- Post Convention associations and a Conservative Breeze

Some informants noted that the period around 2000 was a relatively magic conjuncture for equality advocates. The broad directive on race that was adopted then, in part as a reaction to the rise of the Far Right in Austria (Geddes and Guiradon 2004), would be very difficult today. They remarked that the political climate in the European Union since 2004 has become more conservative and less willing to invest in social issues. Symptoms of a conservative turn included the European Parliamentary elections in 2004 that returned a relatively center-right parliament, with many conservative members from the new member states, and the similarly relatively conservative Commission appointed in 2005.

A further damper was the 2005 defeat of the European Constitutional Treaty in referendums in two core members of the Union, France and the Netherlands. As the draft treaty included ratification of a number of articles that would improve the position of civil society and social rights, this left NGO's and Equal opportunities bureaucrats within the European institutions in limbo. This was particularly depressing, as civil society groups worked actively together to put a wedge into the structure of the Convention for a civil society voice, and new actors appeared on the scene and were encouraged by the interest of the Santer Commission in Governance in civic participation.

Another negative trend was the rising importance of race and ethnicity issues with conservative reactions in election returns in Denmark and the Netherlands and a number of notable racially tinged incidents across Europe linked with integration and social inclusion of ethnic minorities such as murders of Theo Van Gogh and populist politician Pim Fortuyn in

Holland, the Danish cartoon uproar at beginning of 2006, the 2005 urban riots in France, football incidents in the World Cup in Germany and the ongoing headscarf debates.

4. Structures of representation and meta-umbrellas

Beginning in the mid-nineties there has been an exponential growth in European transnational civil society organizations and the institutionalization in Brussels of other interest organizations besides the economic and social partners already represented in the European Economic and Social Committee (Ruzza 2004, Greenwood 2003, Comston and Greenwood 2001, Smismans 2003). As examples, the European Women's Lobby (Helfferrich and Kolb 2001), which today has some 4000 organizational members, including 18 European transnational women's networks, was founded in 1995 and runs primarily with funding from the EU Commission which is about half of the 2.2 million Euro total spent on Gender Equality annually (European Commission 'Equality between women and men 2005(c): 12). The central player for sexual orientation issues is the International Gay and Lesbian Alliance, which founded its Europe regional association in 1996.

The interesting feature of the transnational organization of civil society in Brussels is that even while national organizations join into target group umbrella organizations, groups also form loose or more formal catch-all associations to push social issues often supported by European Union funding. Since 1995, several major meta-umbrella's have appeared including *the European Platform of Social NGO's*, the *Civil Society Contact Group* and the *Liaison Group of Organizations and Networks in the European Economic and Social Committee* which we will describe below. The main women's organization, the EWL has found a place at the core of management structures of these 3 bodies as an independent voice, rather than as just one member of the social interest groups in civil society. Thus while women were not always successful in achieving representation in the new structures of

Anti-Discrimination in the European Commission, gender issues are present as a separate group in the 3 most important structures for social civil society in the Brussels landscape.

Among the meta-umbrellas touching on equality issues, the first and most important is the *Platform of European Social Non Governmental Organizations* which was born out of a conflict around European Social Policy in the early 1990's. Thanks to impulses from a small group of key actors, and assistance from the Commission's Padraig Flynn, this European Social Forum transformed into a formal platform in 1997 (Greenwood 2003:218, Smismans 2003, Cullen 2004). It now includes some 40 members, primarily umbrellas of national interest based associations. 90% of these umbrella members have a Brussels office and together they represent thousands of organizations across Europe. Most of the money in their budget (700,000 of some 840,000 Euro) comes from Commission and project money (Social Platform 2006). The Platform cites Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission and who reflects the positive and progressive sphere of the nineties, *It is time to realize that Europe is not just run by European institutions but by national, regional and local authorities too - and by civil society* (Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission in Social Platform 2006: 5) While only 12 of the Social Platform members are explicitly concerned with Article 13 social equality and policy issues (and only 3 are concerned with gender and sexuality), these few organizations play a vocal and visible role in the policies and management of the Social Platform. This helps the individual umbrella NGO's as well. As an ILGA representative commented, *If we are a lone voice (in the Constitution process) we are easily ignored, but in this we were part of a broader coalition, which a platform really is, a coalition of NGO's*. The meta-platform structure can thus provide clout to single identity issues if other members join behind it, but naturally also presents the paradox of having to speak with a relatively unified voice to the outside world, which effectively mitigates against radical accents. An informant working on racism commented that issues of intersectionality frequently fell between two stools in the work of the Social Platform because of the need for homogenization.

The run up to the European Constitutional Convention in 2001-2002 and the work on the Constitution and Charter of Fundamental Rights led to a further reconfiguration of civil society actors and the foundation of the Civil Society Contact Group. At least symbolically, the Convention implicated civil society in the whole process in the name of the goals of openness, legitimacy and transparency.² This openness did not come by itself. The actions of new social movements of anti-globalists and alternative future groups allying left labor, environmental, identity groups and anarchists were very important. The loud protests that increasingly surround the meetings of the European Tops such as Laeken in December 2001 following on the dramatic events of Seattle in 1999 and the G8 in Genua 2000 forced leaders to take a stance on the democratic form of the future European Union and provide channels of audience, if not communication. In the Declaration of Laeken the following ambition is to be found:

To broaden the debate and involve all citizens, a Forum will be opened for organizations that represent the civil society...It will be a structured network of organizations that will be regularly informed about the discussions in the Convention. Their contribution will be added to the debate. They will be heard and consulted on specific questions according to a process which will be constituted by the Presidium (Declaration of Laeken 2001)

The meta-umbrella, the *Civil Society Contact Group* came in the wake of this declaration to ensure that the chances for civil society participation could be increased. It initially included environmental, human rights, social and development NGO's with the ETUC as an observer. Today the Group represents 7 large networks of NGO's platforms on environment, social,

² The White Paper on *European Governance 2001* and follow up documents on *Approaches to European Governance for Democratic European Governance*, as well as statements by Prodi and Kinnock all indicate a commitment to promoting the role of civil society in Europe. (Greenwood 2003: 287).

policy, development, women, culture, human rights and public health. The ETUC, representing European union workers and the EUCIS-LLL, representing NGOs promoting longlife learning have observer status. The Women's Lobby managed to obtain a seat representing itself as a separate issue. The Group is housed in the same offices as the European Social Platform, and receives funding from the Commission and private foundations.

This form of involvement in a forum is an echo of the responses of other top international meetings of governments in the UN, G-8 and World Bank contexts, where the NGO gatherings in the margins of the meetings attract more delegates and attention than the main events (RIO, Porto Allegre, Johannesburg, Peking). The European Commission has attempted to manage participation in structured networks- coupling recognition to participation and forcing coordination and alliances on participants.

Most (but not all) NGO's have demanded a treaty grounded civil dialogue in the European Union since the mid-nineties. The third important meta-umbrella for civil society issues, the *Liaison Group with European Organizations and Networks* developed out of the conference convened by Jacques Delors on the Civil Dialogue in 1999. It took place under the aegis of the institution which was initially set up to hear social voices, the European Union Economic and Social Committee (EESC). The EESC groups the Social Partners of Employers (Group 1), Employee organizations (Group 2), and other organizations (Group 3), but has fallen under critique for leaving out many elements of civil society. Group 3 has been seen as an having an unmanageable grab bag of small employers, farmers, charity groups, etc. With the Constitutional Convention, the mission of the EESC as a place for civil society voice was underlined, and initiatives were taken to remedy the fact that the EESC membership did not reflect the diversity of organized civil society in the 21st century. However, civil society resisted being melted into the formal corset of the EESC which led to the founding of a new format, also referred to as a contact group, aimed to work as a 'liaison body and forum for

political dialogue (CESE 1498/2003 fin, p.5). The *Liaison Group with European Organizations and Networks* and began in September 2004 and met 6 times in 2005. This Group is based on 14 sector organizations, and includes many member groups from the Civil Society Contact Group plus actors from the European Movement Permanent Forum of Civil Society (Development, Youth, Gender, Education, Family), the European Movement, Consumers, Voluntary Service providers, Cooperatives, Health Insurance, Art, European Citizenship, Disability, and Rural development. Once again, the European Women's Lobby managed to secure a separate seat in this much smaller catch all super umbrella. The Liaison Group has institutional linkages in ways that the outsider groups of civil society do not. As an informant noted, while a civil servant from another DG might be unlikely to come to a conference of the Social Platform, they are likely to show up at a conference of the Liaison Group. In terms of addressing Article 13 issues across the board, however, both the Civil Society Contact Group and the EESC Liaison group do not have top level delegates from race/ethnicity groups nor from the sexual orientation lobbies. These are represented by the Social Platform.

With this growth of new and ever more amalgamating structures, a number of concerns are raised by the equality actors themselves as well as by their partners. The European Commission has been accused of structuring the dialogue. Equally so, each identity and/or interest group needs to jockey to see that it succeeds in attaining its specific goals and maintains a profile. Political actors wonder about the extent to which the many trees in the civil society forest are representing the diversity of grass roots voices and national variety once one reaches the rarefied level of homogenization in the major platform organizations. Certainly the same people are found, much as in corporate board interlock in the business world, in many of the key positions in all three of the meta-organizations mentioned here. The organizations themselves, in a group such as the Civil Society Contact group see the need to work on issues such as accreditation, as 'it is more time than ever for NGO's to develop a common positive and pro-active approach' to answer questions on their

representativity, legitimacy and transparency' (European Union Civil Society Contact Group 2006, p. 1)

5. Changes in the resource bases and organizational form of equality interest groups and the growth of new contenders for equal opportunity benefits

Most observers agree that the new social movements that survived from the seventies as groups became more established and professionalized, even if they are not in agreement about how this has occurred (Kriesi 1996, Banaszak et al 2003:3). The organizations moved off the streets to become more formal organizations. Members now sometimes provide cash but do not provide active contentious behavior. Increasingly, equality movement organizations rely on subsidies from government sources for their professional staffing, which poses significant problems for their independence from the object of their lobbying intentions. This is particularly relevant for European directed groups. To work with the policy makers in the European Union requires a high degree of professionalism. Because this is so, the European Union has funded the organization of civil society so that they have a voice on an equal level, but this relationship presents a serious paradox for socially critical actors. The Commission is sometimes seen to be dictating the priorities for policy input. Another issue, besides the expense of running a transnational professional lobbying organization is the ability of such organizations to represent the diversity of their supporters. This issue is already problematic for national level umbrella organizations. When the dimension of nation is added in, the quality of the voice of a European level group, and its ability to reflect the diversity of a membership is even more problematic.

6. The challenges and opportunities of the re-ordered equality landscape for a democratic voice for gender issues

The landscape for equal opportunity actors in Europe has substantially changed since 2000 thanks to new member states, new legislative tools, new structures, and the presence of new or reconfigured networks of actors and opportunities. Some of the developments such as the exponential growth of organizational offices in Brussels itself support communication and the diffusion of frames between equal opportunities actors. However, authors that have examined the Social Platform thus far (Geyer 2001, Cullen 2004, Greenwood 2003) are united in underlining the substantial difficulties and disadvantages with uniting strange bedfellows across issues. Between the organizations there are sometimes fundamental ideological divides, as for example around the question of sexuality between Christian groups and ILGA , or between the organizations dedicated to the young and those addressing age. These sorts of distinctions can be hypothesized to affect the meta-platforms formed since 2000.

The changed legislative environment in the European Union with increased tools including the new directives on equality in services delivery provides improved and stronger bases for challenging inequalities. Further, in countries such as Belgium with increasing regionalization, new authorities are created to watchdog equality of rights and opportunities, providing new structures for lobbying (Meier and Celis forthcoming) However, the expansion of structures ostensibly dedicated to equality in federal countries such as Belgium, Spain and Germany can also mean a watering down of expertise and punch. What are the implications of these changes for the political representation of new gender order?

7. Cross cutting identities and joined up politics: The challenge for European Union Equality Politics

One of the main sources of concern is the extent to which all of the changes are intercepted and interpreted by grass roots actors. A number of initiatives coming from the European Commission's Directorate General of Employment and Social Affairs encourage 'joined-up' approaches to equality, supporting projects that address multiple dimensions of discrimination as in the selection criteria for projects for the Equal Opportunities Year in

2007. Research in Belgium on organizational networks indicates that the most local levels of social organization working with gender and sexuality issues are insufficiently prepared for initiatives requiring cross-issue mobilization. Frame sharing and coalition building across the issues of race, gender and sexuality is still very much in a beginning stage in most countries of the European Union according to Brussels informants in transnational platforms. Even at the European level, transnational platforms are not always knowledgeable about each other's issues or able to forge cross-issue alliances. (Godemont and Motmans 2005, Wiercx and Woodward 2004, Woodward 2006). This Belgian research showed limited knowledge of other organizations working on the same issues, let alone issues of the target groups of ethnicity and sexuality, both at the level of transnational actors as well as at the local level. Coalition formation on specific issues was relatively rare and most information exchange went through the larger platform organizations rather than between individual groups coming from another equality identity.

A particular area for concern is the degree to which the institutionalized and governmentally funded women's movements are capable of forging alliances with women of color and from migrant backgrounds. In Flanders a liaison group for Women and Girls of Immigrant background was formed and funded by the Flanders Regional Government to provide a platform for civil society organization and research on new Belgian and immigrant women, but the relationships with both the general self-organizations of immigrants and ethnic minorities, which are often dominated by men, and with the institutionalized Flemish women's movement have been turbulent (Godemont & Motmans 2005, S'jegers 2005). Anecdotal evidence from informant interviews with European Commission and social movement actors in transnational organizations indicates that such tensions are not unusual. Empirical research in Belgium also indicated that there was also limited willingness to go to bat for issues that were priorities for other groups. Belgian institutionalized women's movement actors found international solidarity with women in developing countries a high priority, but had ranked the demands of the sexuality movement for the recognition of family partnerships and rights of adoption relatively low (Wiercx and Woodward 2004) Equally so

the sexuality movements did not place a high priority on mainstreaming gender equality issues or the issues of women in development. In terms of strategies and priorities, it is structurally difficult for local movement organizations to go beyond the self-identities of their members and work on issues further than their mandate, even if most activists are committed to solidarity.

8. Re-thinking gender orders and going beyond hierarchies through intersectionality

At this juncture, the renewed interest in cross-cutting issues of identity and oppression in feminist theory can be extremely important. The changes in the European policy landscape pose questions of both theoretical and strategic significance. Certainly the developments are sometimes seen as a challenge by gender actors. Particularly the new legal framework, and the new organisation of social actors into joined-up platforms presents a set of puzzles for activists who wish to affect policy and preserve democratic voice.

While feminism and the women's movement took on the challenge of the differences between women at an early stage thanks to challenges about social class, sexual orientation and race in the UK and the United States (Brah and Phoenix 2004, Yuval Davis 2006, Prins 2006), these issues seldom occupied the centre stage in the development of a European Union approach to gender equality (Verloo 2006). There is some justice in a critique that while the European women's organisations became more consolidated and more interlocked with policy makers, they also lost touch with issues of difference between women. While these issues were frequently in the forefront in feminist discussions in the seventies and eighties, the increasing concern with the situation of women globally and local concentration on what was obtainable within existing policy frameworks, meant that the differences and resultant inequalities between women were not always centre stage.

It is most likely not accidental that it has been feminist legal scholars in the US and the UK that have been instrumental in relaunching thinking about questions of the relations and connections between different sorts of discrimination and diversity (Cooper 2004, Crenshaw 1991, Shaw 2004). The current discussion about the connections between race, sexuality, gender and class in particular is no longer under the heading of 'difference' but of intersectionality, even if the issues of cross-cutting and complex identities have been constantly present in feminist scholarship. One of the stimulation's for legal scholars in the United States has been how to use anti-discrimination law in cases where several different potential grounds for discrimination are present, such as sexual orientation and race. The same problem is now facing practitioners who want to use the new legal tools in the European Union to fight discrimination while continuing pro-active transformative measures.

The recent resurgence of interest in cross-cutting and intersecting inequalities in feminist theory comes at a crucial time for social movement development and equality policy. In a special issue, the *European Journal of Women's Studies* (Phoenix and Pattynama 2006) notes that European conferences on 'intersectionality' have taken off perhaps in part because of a need by social actors to recharge their understandings of equality in a diverse Europe. Verloo fears that despite the naming of multiple grounds for discrimination, there is serious reason for concern about the lack of insight into the differences between inequalities, and little attention to intersectionality in actual policy making. She sees *a world in which gender equality policies are sometimes racist and classist, in which anti-racism policies often disregard gender and identity politics colours all equality policies* (Verloo 2006:223). What can policy makers and activists do? The tools developed for gender equality have sometimes fallen short in addressing other issues. Can present gender mainstreaming approaches be broadened? Or should the approaches developed for gender equality be tailored to the specificities of the other issues? This is an impossible choice to make, and should be led by political dynamics and participation of civil society. However, the

social actors do not seem ready for the challenge and the structures for participation shaped by the European Union are ill-suited to dealing with all the diversity in a democratic way.

At the beginning of this chapter, it was noted that the gender equality movement has been seen as an example of an effective transnational European social movement. Authors such as Shaw (2004), Verloo (2006), and Squires (2005) have been trying to reconsider European gender equality victories in terms of their usefulness for a wider equality battle. At present, some of the necessary underpinnings for intersectional alliances are absent. There is insufficient knowledge of possible partners, and no track record of successful trans-issue campaigning. The more intricate academic understanding of different 'systems' or 'structures' of inequalities in the scholarship around intersectionality has little resonance in the policy being produced at the level of the European Union. Further, social movement actors in the major lobby equality groups at the transnational level face significant organisational challenges with the expansion of the European Union and changing venues for policy on rights, discrimination and equality. The developments in academic discussion about intersectionality may possibly provide some clues as to how to think about and work for a Europe that preserves the achievements for equality between men and women, and expands them to even greater effect by having a more sophisticated understanding and policy weapons to deal with complexity. These developments need to occur in a democratic space that is inclusive and broad if it is to result in new reciprocities and solidarities.

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