



**Quality in Gender+ Equality Policies**

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**Conceptual framework for gender+ equality policies  
in a multicultural context**

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## **CONTENTS<sup>1</sup>**

Introduction

Relationship between inequalities

Identification of relevant inequalities: including class

Making gender visible or de-gendering

Making power visible

Beyond small groups: distinguishing strands, projects and policy field

Alliances, coalitions and hegemony

The meaning and positioning of gender equality in policy priorities

Tension between mainstreaming and anti-discrimination strategies, breadth of remit

Conclusion: beyond intersectionality

References

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## INTRODUCTION

In a multicultural context the understanding of intersectionality is critical to any analysis of the quality of gender+ equality policies. The intersection of multiple forms of inequality and difference means that there can be no simple unitary category of woman to which gender equality policies can be applied. The analysis of the nature of these intersections is essential if their implications for gender and citizenship in a multicultural context are to be understood.

This report from Quing's strand, STRIQ, on intersectionality, provides the conceptual framework for the analysis of gender+ equality policies in a multicultural context. This deliverable D42 sits alongside two further reports on STRIQ: one which focuses on accounts of good practice in each of our countries (D45); and the final report which brings together the findings from the whole of STRIQ (D62).

The report provides an account of the dilemmas in the development of relevant concepts to address the issues of multiculturalism and intersectionality, and argues for a new conceptual framework. The report draws on the literature documented in the earlier report D13 'Report (theory) on intersectionality', the account of methodological issues in D14 'Research guidelines for the analysis of intersectionality elements in LARG and WHY', and is informed by the empirical findings of the STRIQ research for each of the 29 countries plus EU in D47, the discussions in the Quing workshops, as well as further reviews and analysis of relevant literature.

The importance of taking intersectionality into account is widely recognised in gender analysis, although there remain significant differences as to how this should be best achieved (Acker 2000; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Bhopal 1997; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Carbin and Harjunen 2007; Collins 1998; Davis 1981; Felski 1997; Jakobsen 1998; Lundström 2006; Lykke 2004; Medaglia 2000; Mirza 1997; Mohanty 1991; Phoenix and Pattynama 2006; Verloo 2006; Yuval-Davis 2006). The canonical text by Crenshaw (1991) has been important in setting the agenda for current debates, even though there were many earlier interpretations of the issue of multiple

inequalities (Hartmann 1976; Davis 1981). Dilemmas can be found in the range of implications of intersectionality for gender equality policies: in what ways and under what circumstances are multiple inequalities articulated so as to improve the quality and strength of gender equality policies. The issue is not only whether taking intersectionality into account strengthens gender equality policies, but rather what forms of engagement with intersecting inequalities have better, worse, or simply different outcomes for the quality of gender equality policies. The meaning of gender equality is not given, but is contested, with implications for the nature and effectivity of the policies. These include issues about the standard against which gender equality is measured if the meaning of gender equality varies with intersections with other inequalities; and the implications of the variations in whether gender equality and other inequalities are made explicit or are relatively invisible for the quality of the policy.

The issues reviewed here include: the relationship between inequalities; identification of relevant inequalities including class; making gender visible or de-gendering; making power visible; distinguishing between small groups, strands, projects and policy field; alliances, coalitions and hegemony; the meaning and positioning of gender equality in policy priorities; the tension between mainstreaming and anti-discrimination strategies and the breadth of remit.

## **CONCEPTUALISING INTERSECTIONALITY AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MULTIPLE INEQUALITIES**

It is necessary to consider not only the various definitions of key concepts in the analysis of multiculturalism but also the range of adjacent terms and concepts in order to be fully inclusive. The concept of 'intersectionality' is one of several ways to address the interrelationship of multiple forms of inequality.

Only if the range of terms and concepts are inclusive can conclusions be safely drawn as to whether multiculturalism and intersectionality are addressed in practice in policy. Several concepts are relevant to an analysis of multiculturalism, including intersectionality, multiple discrimination, vulnerability, disadvantage and

marginalisation. Interpretations of the concept of intersectionality are varied in both theory and practice. Analysis and reviews of gender equality policy in the EU and its Member States rarely comment on intersectionality, with the apparent implication that it is not a major or integral concern of these policies (Braithwaite 1999; Daly 2005; Lombardo and Meir 2006; Mósesdóttir et al 2006; Verloo 2005). However, it is not unusual to find that groups of the most disadvantaged women have been given special or additional attention in such programmes, though this is rarely labelled as attention to intersectionality (Braithwaite 1999). This means that there must be caution in any conclusion about the absence of consideration of intersectional issues unless this has been investigated using the full range of concepts that overlap with that of intersectionality, for example, 'disadvantaged women' (Braithwaite 1999) and 'vulnerable' women (Department for Communities and Local Government 2007).

There are five main ways in which the nature of the relationship between the strands of inequality has been conceptualised in policy contexts (Walby 2007): single, multiple, additive, mutually adaptive and mutually constitutive.

First, all inequalities are reduced to a single commonality, such as class, or social exclusion. Although such a position has long been rejected in gender theory (Hartmann 1976), it is important not to ignore the tendency to reduce multiple inequalities into a single overarching inequality, which has a strong European tradition in some forms of socialist and social democratic politics and policy that focuses on class (in its more radical form) or on social exclusion (in its less radical 'third way' form).

Second, multiple inequalities are treated as separate and distinct, to be addressed by different policies, laws and agencies. While few well read in gender theory would recommend such an approach, it is important not to ignore the practice of compartmentalising different inequalities into different policy worlds, supported by different political constituencies; separate and isolated, rather than added together in any way at all.

Third, multiple forms of inequality are treated as additive, for example an individual might be seen as 'doubly' disadvantaged, 'disadvantaged women' (Braithwaite

1997); 'vulnerable', 'vulnerable women' (Department for Communities and Local Government 2007).

Fourth, inequalities strands are treated as mutually adaptive and fifth as mutually constituting each other. Much recent attention has been focused on the analytic move away from additive forms of inequality to multiple disadvantages towards that of the mutual adaptation or constitution of the forms of inequality at their point of intersection; this is often presented as a challenge to identity politics (Crenshaw 1989; Hancock 2007). The concept of mutual adaptation captures the way in which a system of gender relations adapts to its environment that contains systems of other inequalities. The concept of mutual constitution goes further, in its connotations of the more totalising notion of the co-constitution of inequalities by each other.

The term 'intersectionality' can be used on one of two ways here. The more precise usage in the literature is to restrict the meaning of 'intersectionality' to those cases where inequality strands are seen as mutually adaptive or constitutive, but the more generic usage is its application to any case where multiple inequalities are addressed in the same policy space, including those instances where they are seen as additive as well as those where they are seen as mutually adaptive or constitutive.

There are in addition more abstract understandings of intersectionality (McCall 2005; Walby 2007); in particular through the destabilisation of categories (Braidotti 1994; Staunæs 2003), but since such destabilisation makes actual analysis rather hard (Felski 1997; Sayer 1997; McCall 2005), this is not addressed in this paper.

## **IDENTIFICATION OF RELEVANT STRANDS OF INEQUALITY**

There are several different ways of distinguishing between the various strands of inequality referred to by multiculturalism and intersectionality. Different priorities have been accorded to different intersections with gender, in particular ethnicity and religion, but also strands related to discriminations newly made illegal by the EU. In addition there are further possible inequality strands, not least that of class.

Much of the contemporary theoretical debate on intersectionality has been concerned with the intersection of gender and ethnicity (Crenshaw 1991; Mirza 1997; Collins 1998; Medaglia 2000). There is a particular question as to whether the intersection of gender and religion is becoming more important because of the increased political prominence of Islam (Vakulenko 2007), perhaps reinterpreting some of the previous interest in the intersection of gender and ethnicity.

The inclusion of more than two axes of inequality is often seen as desirable, especially gender, ethnicity and class (Davis 1981; Westwood 1984; Phizacklea 1990; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Collins 1998). In an EU context, it might be that six inequality strands are to be considered the most important. The EU Treaty of Amsterdam in 1999 and the consequent Directives to implement it name six grounds for legal action on illegal discrimination, not only the previous gender, ethnicity and disability, but additionally age, religion/belief and sexual orientation (European Commission 2007/9). In this new legal and policy context, further intersections may become of importance. The simultaneous recognition of more than two inequalities is becoming more common, perhaps as a consequence of the EU recognising these additional three grounds for litigation for equality.

There are further possible relevant intersections. The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights 2000 Article 21 lists seven additional grounds of social origin, genetic features, language, political or other opinion, membership of a national minority, property and birth. While these are not currently active in EU legislation, some EU Member States do have additional grounds, for example, Ireland and Hungary. Possibly, the most important further inequality is that of class, although this is not a justicable inequality in the same way as the other six and has some important ontological dissimilarities with them. In addition there are key differences that do not take the form of inequality strands, such as parental and partner status.

The intersection of gender and class is important. In earlier debates there was considerable interest in the intersection of gender and class relations (Hartmann 1976; Acker 2000). In contemporary policy discussions, class, while rarely specified as a set of social relations, frequently emerges as part of agendas concerning social

exclusion, poverty, vulnerability and disadvantage. Indeed such agendas, while not naming specific social relations, are often powerfully inflected by an economically led conception of generic economic disadvantage. Perhaps social exclusion might be seen as a 'soft class' led agenda. Indeed in some instances, there is a tendency for multiple inequalities to be reduced to 'social exclusion' rather than being separately identified.

There are further divides that emerge as important in policy discussions that are not best conceptualised as sets of social relations linked to structural inequalities. These include differences in parental and partner status, e.g. lone mothers (Ford and Millar 1998). The understanding of these issues is aided by the distinctions introduced by the debates on intersectionality even though these are not structural inequalities.

There are many actually existing intersections in social structure, but only some of these become the focus of political and policy attention. The reasons for a move from 'structural intersection' to 'political intersection' (Crenshaw 1991) are potentially of interest. However, here the main focus is on the political intersections that matter for policy development and implementation.

One of the most important challenges to contemporary practice in the consideration of multiple inequalities and intersectionality is the inclusion of class, even though it takes a different ontological form and has a different position in EU-led legal processes than gender and ethnicity.

## **MAKING GENDER VISIBLE OR DE-GENDERING**

Does making gender visible make a difference to the quality of gender+ equality policy? Processes at the point of intersection of inequalities may lead to the invisibility of gender equality or the other inequality strand within the equality policy. There are at least two approaches to this issue. First, is the critique of the processes that make invisible certain groups at the intersection, led by writers such as Crenshaw (1991). Second, is a view that visibility is a contingent but not necessary condition for quality equality policies.

First, invisibility at the point of two intersecting inequalities is raised as a problem by Crenshaw (1991) in her canonical text on intersectionality. This invisibility is regarded as a weakness for the gender equality project as well as for the anti-racist project. Crenshaw uses the concept of intersectionality to grasp the ways in which the interactions of gender and race limit Black women's access to the American labour market, and how a lack of understanding this intersection lead to the marginalisation of Black women and Black women's experiences (Crenshaw 1989). Crenshaw (1991: 1244) argues that the experiences faced by women of colour were 'not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood'. She suggests that previous academic, political and civil societal engagements with the intersections of gender and race/ethnicity have not been sufficiently careful. Rather one identity category is treated as dominant; social power 'works to exclude or marginalise those who are different' (Crenshaw 1991: 1242). 'Contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color' (Crenshaw 1991: 1243). Groups at the intersection of two or more identity categories are left out of focus in both analysis and politics; Black women, ethnic minority women, or 'women of colour', groups positioned at the intersection of gender and ethnicity, become marginalised as a group and 'face limited options of political communities formed either around ethnicity or around gender, rather than political action that engages with the particular difficulties at the intersection'. In the example of domestic violence, the experiences of African-American women are made invisible, with activists not supporting the public release of data on this group at the intersection of gender and ethnicity for fear that 'the statistics might permit opponents to dismiss domestic violence as a minority problem' (Crenshaw 1991: 1253). 'Women of color can be erased by the strategic silences of antiracism and feminism' (Crenshaw 1991: 1253).

Crenshaw notes an important problem – the silencing of the issue of domestic violence against Black women. She is right to note that this silencing is bound up with the position of Black women at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. But there are three problems with the analysis. First, is she right to blame feminists and antiracists for this silencing; is it not more appropriate to blame patriarchs and racists

and the intersection of the dominant rather than subordinate groups and discourses? Second, is silence always worse than explicit naming; are there not some circumstances where a strategic defensive response of silence is more helpful, where explicit naming could result in worse degradation of the oppressed intersectionalised group? Third, is the dichotomy of visibility and invisibility unhelpful in the analysis since many concepts are in between, with forms of naming of inequalities such as gender that are implicit rather than explicit?

Second, in gender mainstreaming the goal is the inclusion of the gender equality project into the mainstream; in the process it is expected that the mainstream will change, and that the gender equality project may be modified (Walby 2005; Rees 2005). A successful outcome will be the creation of a new project that includes and appropriately encompasses the gender equality project; whether or not the gender equality strand retains its explicit naming or not (Moser 2005). In a successful outcome, naming is not necessarily always a concern. However, since the relationship between the mainstream and the gender equality project is not symmetrical – logically the mainstream is larger and more powerful than the challenger project – there is concern that in some circumstances the gender equality project may merely be absorbed, or integrated into the mainstream, with little effect on it (Jahan 1995). In this instance the loss of explicit naming may be taken as indicative of the failure to successfully mainstream. Hence, in the context of gender mainstreaming, the continuation of the naming of gender equality may or may not be regarded as indicative of success or failure; rather other criteria are needed to establish if the content of the gender equality policy is successfully established within the reformed mainstream.

Drawing on these complex debates as to the potential implications of explicit naming of gender equality for the quality and strength of gender equality policies, it is useful to identify the range of possible alternatives. These note the ambivalence as to whether or not explicit naming is always good, while noting the significance of an established presence. There are seven major alternatives, which address whether the project is present and whether it is named and whether it is successful: first, no presence and no naming; second, a visible and separate gender equality project that is present and named, which is usually seen as successful; third, marginalisation,

where a gender project is visible only at the margins but where attempts to make an impact are defeated, with little recognition and naming as consequence; fourth, stigmatisation in which gender is visible, but the attempt at impact is defeated and in which the naming is done by hostile others leading a project against the disadvantaged intersectionalised group; fifth, where a gender project is present but not explicitly named as a result of a strategic defensive silencing in response to a hostile environment; sixth, an attempt at mainstreaming that leads to absorption or integration into mainstream, with consequent loss of naming and little impact; seventh, successful mainstreaming where the gender equality project changes the mainstream project and whether or not there is separate naming is of little consequence.

Visibility and invisibility of gender are at the extreme ends of a continuum. In between lie practices in which gender is partly present and partly submerged. Here is the use of concepts that are loaded or inflected with gender, but not directly named as such. In addition to the seven alternatives described above are circumstances where there are nuanced gendering or de-gendering of policies as well as nuances in the extent to which other inequalities are explicitly or implicitly named. There is the use of categories that are widely understood to include gender but which are not explicit about this; in parallel there may be the use of categories that are widely understood to include other inequalities but which are not explicit about this.

De-gendering is associated with both successful and unsuccessful equality projects. It is more common than the extremes of explicit naming or invisibility. Whether de-gendering is part of a successful integration into a larger project or part of its defeat as a project depends upon the resources available to the gender constituency, the resources to allies and opponents, and the context.

The processes of making gender visible and de-gendering are important processes in framing gender equality politics and policies. Gender is more likely to disappear from view when other inequalities enter the policy arena. However, the level of visibility of gender appears to have no necessary relationship with the quality of the

policy outcome. Rather, the nature of the outcome should be investigated as an empirical question.

## **MAKING POWER VISIBLE**

The analysis of intersectionality has often focused on the actions of the disadvantaged groups. For example, a focus on the actions of white women rather than white men in the context of an intersectional issue facing black women (Crenshaw 1991). However, such an approach inappropriately ignores the role of the more powerful groups in these divisions. In relation to issues of ethnicity, it is important not to neglect the role of racists in the politics of silencing ethnic minority women in issues of domestic violence. Noting the importance of the powerful in each of the intersection might shift some of the focus from the inactions of white feminists to the actions of white racists. Indeed it is hard to understand such silencing outside of an account of the racist structuring of the policy terrain.

The analysis of the powerful is also important in the context of the intersection of gender and class. Employers' bodies have sometimes played important roles in the construction of gender equality policies and institutions. Most of the first wave of countries that integrated their equality commissions into a single body (O'Connell 2002) were countries where the balance of power between organised employers and organised workers was tilted more towards employers. Further there is a tendency for employers to seek to narrow the equality agenda to one based around the removal of illegitimate discrimination so as to secure equal opportunities, pulling away from the broader goal of securing equality of outcome, which lies at the heart of the gender mainstreaming strategy.

## **BEYOND SMALL GROUPS: DISTINGUISHING STRANDS, PROJECTS AND POLICY FIELDS**

Intersectionality and multiculturalism may be specified at the level of the individual, group, strand, project or policy fields. These are all important.

Most analysis has focused on small groups at intersections of gender and ethnicity. In particular social groups that are clients, in some way, of governmental and civil societal policies and politics. For example, Black women may be such a group in relation to domestic violence policy as articulated by government bodies and civil society organisations.

A focus on groups is not the only approach. A focus on the different constructions of policy projects provides additional insights to the analysis. Here there is interest in the implications of intersectionality for the constitution of a project.

A further focus is that of the policy field itself (rather than only the clients within that policy field). An example is the extension of the policy field of gender-based violence to include forced marriage, in which the constitution of the policy arena itself is structured by the approach to intersectionality within the policy terrain.

It is important not to presume that particular categories or groups will necessarily share and support the same political and policy project. This will depend on context. Under certain circumstances a group may move from being a group in itself to being a group for itself. The specification of such circumstances is an important part of the analysis.

## **ALLIANCES, COALITIONS AND HEGEMONY**

Different equality groups may have different priorities for the use of resources and the shaping of the definition of an ostensibly common equality project. These may result in competition, alliance or hegemony.

There are different forms of competition among equality strands, ranging from competitive political organising to active and acrimonious hostility. There has been concern that the integration of policy machinery for different equality strands will lead to greater competition for a superior place in a hierarchy of inequality strands, that competition would become more important than cooperation (Bell 2004; Verloo

2006). One route to the development of a hierarchy of equality strands occurs when groups associated with some strands have stronger legal powers for remedying discrimination than others (Hepple et al 2000; Bell 2004). There can be competition for resources between strands within a single equalities body, as for example was felt by feminists during the early development of the Northern Ireland Single Equalities Body (O'Connell 2002).

An example of discursively organised competition between strands is that of the agenda surrounding 'choice', which is currently associated with the neoliberal project, but has at some times been adopted by feminists, as in 'a woman's right to choose'. The choice agenda can be used in opposition to the agenda of equality in circumstances where women are deemed to have freely chosen options even though they have implications for greater inequality (Hakim 1991). For example, if women freely choose specific jobs because they are 'caring' and have part-time hours; then they can be described within the choice agenda as if they have simultaneously accepted the associated lower pay. The agenda of choice can also in some circumstances invoke the discourse of 'diversity', which tends to prioritise difference over equality (Hankivsky 2004). This means that 'choices' made on the basis of 'diversity' may be claimed to take priority over claims on the basis of equality. This can mean that prioritising support for diversity may entail support for inequality. Other forms of competition can involve a sharper clash of values, as for example, in the UK in 2007, when Churches fought the application of anti-discrimination laws to adoption by gay couples.

Rather than competition, the relations between social groups may involve those of alliance (Jakobsen 1998), coalition (Ferree and Hess 1996) or network (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Moghadam 2005). In addition they may take the form of a shared project, as in the case of some forms of social democracy (Huber and Stephens 2001). Some alliances cross the boundary between state and civil society, as in the important alliances identified between elected women politicians, feminist bureaucrats, and feminists in civil society such as academics and activists (Halsaa 1998; Vargas and Wieringa 1998; Veitch 2005) sometimes in 'velvet triangles' (Woodward 2004). The development of practices and institutions at the inter-face of

state and civil society is important in increasing the impact of feminist developments in civil society on the state.

Alliances and coalitions often involve partners that are asymmetrical in their resources. This may mean that one strand or project may achieve hegemony over the others. The movement of an equality project into the mainstream in order to secure the resources of the mainstream for the equality project is a common if contested practice (Walby 2005). If successful, there are rewards for the equality project. However, there is a risk that the equality project merely becomes absorbed or integrated into the mainstream, eroding its own project (Jahan 1995). A parallel issue emerges if several equality projects merge: they may each gain from the support of the others; but it is also the case that one can become hegemonic at the expense of the rest.

## **TENSION BETWEEN MAINSTREAMING AND NON-DISCRIMINATION STRATEGIES**

The nature of the gender equality strategies changes in the context of other inequalities in the same policy field. There are several potential changes.

Gender equality is only one of several competing priorities in policy development. There is considerable variation in the extent to which it is prioritised. Alternatives include other conceptions of social justice. The meaning of gender equality may vary between different ethnic, cultural and religious groups; and between different policy domains, different countries and different times (Rees 1998; Squires 2005; Verloo 2005; Walby 2005). The notion of a single standard of gender equality (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, the UN Beijing Platform for Action, the EU) is challenged by taking the diversity consequent on intersecting inequalities into account. A focus on intersecting inequalities sometimes has a tendency to reduce the focus on inequality and power, in a movement from 'inequality' to 'difference' (Barnes and Ashtiany 2003).

There has been very considerable restructuring of the equality policy, machinery and law in EU Member States since the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam. This has involved the introduction of additional grounds (or strands) on which discrimination has become illegal and, in some countries, and the introduction of governmental and civil societal equality machinery that is integrated for all six strands (European Commission 2007/9). Whether this is leading to an improvement or reduction in the quality of gender+ equality machinery and policy is a contested issue (Collins 2002; O’Cinneide 2002; Shaw 2004; Verloo 2006). Areas that are particularly relevant to investigating the implications of these changes include: resources, including staff (and their accumulated expertise), funds, organisation, and laws; discourse and frames, including whether the concept of gender equality is present or absent; and the scope of the project, in particular, whether the gender equality project grows or shrinks in scope. There is a parallel debate on these issues in relation to trade unions (Briskin and Eliasson 1999; Gagnon and Ledwith 2000).

In some countries there has been a merger of governmental machinery for different inequalities into single bodies (PLS Ramboll 2002); this is sometimes associated with other mergers, such as the development of laws that apply to more than one equality ground in the same Act. However, these may be uneven, with mergers for some aspects of the machinery and not others, as in the UK, where the implementation agencies are merged, but not all of the policy development bodies in central government. There are variations in the extent to which governmental equality machinery takes separate, integrated, intersectional or coalitional forms in relation to multiple inequalities. There is also a question as to whether or not the internal structuring of merged bodies contains separate equalities branches or committees (O’Cinneide 2002). There is a related set of questions concerning the relationship of the equality machinery to wider political and civil societal forces. Civil society organisations concerned with inequalities may take separate, integrated, intersectional or coalitional forms. The organisations may change their relationships in response to the changes in the governmental equality machinery. Also the institutional and informal interface between governmental and civil societal equality organisations may change in its approach to issues of intersectionality. Civil societal organisations and their interface with governmental equality policy bodies may change as well as the governmental bodies.

The European Commission has encouraged the development of single equalities bodies: 'It is also positive to note the trend towards the establishment of single equalities bodies dealing with all of the grounds of discrimination covered by the Directives' (European Commission 2004: 26) in the context of a need to 'develop a coherent and integrated approach towards the fight against discrimination. This approach seeks to make the most of joint efforts to combat discrimination and to benefit from transfers of experience and good practice across the various grounds. It provides a more effective basis for addressing situations of multiple discrimination. It allows for common legal and policy approaches covering the different grounds, including common definitions of discrimination' (European Commission 2004: 3). However, the Commission also notes potential challenges, especially for new Member States in relation to the new strands.

Addressing inequalities in addition to gender in the same policy machinery may lead to the resources available being reduced by being diverted away from gender equality or increased if there is effective pooling of resources. Resources take a variety of forms, including staff (paid and volunteers), funds (the budget allocated), organisation (effectiveness and focus) and legal (laws and their implementation). The resources relevant here include in particular those associated with the governmental equality machinery; but they additionally include the capacity to mobilise resources in other governmental institutions, the law and in civil society. Organisations may address multiple inequalities in several different ways: there may be separate organisations for each inequality; the organisations may be integrated, each addressing multiple inequalities; there may be organisations or institutions addressing specific intersectional instances (rather than all inequalities); and organisations may take coalitional forms, in which members are rooted in other institutions (which themselves may be specialised in just one inequality or intersection) but come together for a specific common negotiated project. Mergers may lead to the strengthening or dilution of gender equality policies. Changes to the form of the organisational structure may have implications for their policy priorities. Separate organisations may facilitate the development of policies that are carefully focused on and tailored to deal with the specifics of a single inequality or they may be duplicative and hence weaker overall. Changes in outcome depend partly on

whether the previous equality machinery ignored or addressed intersectionality issues. They also depend on whether the merger resulted in increases or decreases in the paid staff and budget relevant to gender equality. Mergers may lead to a loss of organisational focus and attention to gender equality or not; in particular resources may or may not be diverted from gender equality when the same organisation addresses multiple inequalities.

An anti-discrimination strategy is narrowly focused on reducing just one specific way in which inequality is produced – through discrimination. The strategy of mainstreaming enlarges the project of gender equality by broadening the range ways and policies that are considered relevant beyond discrimination. The European Commission has led the development of gender equality policies go beyond shared notions of non-discrimination. For example, narrowing the gender gaps in employment has involved developing policies to facilitate the balancing care and employment, for instance through the promotion of flexible working hours. Such a policy engages with the mechanisms that generate gender inequality within employment in a way that is not reducible to the notion of ‘combating discrimination’. In the field of disability, the development of the policy that employers should engage in the reasonable accommodation of disabled workers by minor changes in the physical environment is specific to this field and hardly relevant to other inequalities. This issue requires an in-depth understanding of the constitution of each of the inequalities; their differences as well as commonalities. Does the use of a common rather than distinctive framework within which to address multiple and diverse inequalities tend to lead to a narrowing of the focus to employment, since this is the area where there is legal competence for all of the grounds? When multiple grounds of inequality are considered together, is the strategy of mainstreaming sustainable, indeed adopted by more strands; or is it narrowed for all strands to that of ‘anti-discrimination’? Is the newer and wider ranging equality process of ‘mainstreaming’ undermined by the renewed emphasis on the older concept of non-discrimination? While combating discrimination was the starting point of much EU policy on inequality, recent developments, especially in gender equality, have widened the range of generative mechanisms beyond that captured by the term discrimination. This is exemplified in the development of the concept and strategy of mainstreaming in which equality is to be included as a concern in all policy development. But in the

search for a common to each of the six grounds, and the apparent assumption of their ontological similarity, there is the repeated use of the term 'discrimination' in the 2004 Commission Green Paper rather than that of 'mainstreaming'. While mainstreaming, which developed in relation to gender, is being applied to ethnicity and to a lesser extent to disability, it has not been extended to the newer grounds of religion, sexual orientation and age.

It is inappropriate to assume that one policy will address all inequalities appropriately. The underlying causes of multiple inequalities have significant differences; they have different ontological structures (O'Cinneide 2002; Verloo 2006; Walby 2007, 2009). Implicit in the European Commission's (2004) paper is an assumption of the similarity of the equalities, at least in relation to the aspects for which institutional mechanisms to address inequalities can be developed. While there are some common grounds, such as discrimination in employment, there are further sources of inequality. While the commonalities can be addressed using the same policy measures and instruments, the differences require policy instruments that are tailored to meet them. There are common shared areas in discrimination in employment and the provision of goods and services, where the law and policy interventions are the most developed, but there is also need for additional nuanced policy interventions.

Does engagement with multiple inequalities lead to the gender equality project growing or shrinking in scope; made more ambitious or narrower? Is there competition rather than cooperation between the equality groups; does one gain hegemony over the project at the expense of the others? Most EU-led equality policies started with equal treatment laws that were focused on employment; later extending, for some grounds, to the sale of goods and services. For some equality grounds there have been the development of policies in further policy domains; for example, regulations and provisions to reduce gender-based violence against women. Does the extension of the equality focus to multiple inequalities lead to a narrowing of the policy domains back towards employment; or does it facilitate the extension of equality principles to a wider range of policy areas for a wider range of equality grounds? Both tendencies to narrow and widen the remit of equality policy

appear to exist. It is a matter for empirical investigation as to which is dominant, and to understand the circumstances which produce one or the other policy outcome.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is time to go beyond the concept of 'intersectionality' in order to understand the varied ways in which multiple inequalities coexist and have effects on each other, especially but not only, in the policy world. There are seven main points.

First, in conceptualising the relationship between multiple inequalities, the inequalities need to be separately addressed not only their points of intersection. Only when the distinctive ontology of each inequality is understood can policies be adequately developed to address them and their intersections.

Second, it is important to avoid intersectionality leading to a disproportionate consideration of some inequalities at the expense of others, in particular, ethnicity at the expense of class. The identification of relevant inequalities should include class, despite its different ontological and legal status, without re-establishing its traditional hegemonic position. The development of a new policy field around the justiciable inequalities has led to class being either neglected or addressed in a separate policy domain; its re-entry into the new field of equalities has the potential to dominate the field. Class needs to be addressed, but in its place.

Third, the processes of making gender visible and of de-gendering have contingent rather than necessary effects on the quality of policy that addresses gender equality, depending on resources and context. While the separate naming of gender is often advantageous to a gender equality project, this is not always and necessarily the case. The effects of visibility and de-gendering should be treated as questions for empirical enquiry.

Fourth, in order to address power, it is necessary to make visible the powerful within each set of social relations. The use of the concept of 'strand' can sometimes obscure this. There is not only a competition or hierarchy of strands, but power

relations within each one. Intersecting inequalities are better understood as sets of social relations, each with ontological depth, rather than as 'strands'.

Fifth, it is important to go beyond the focus on small groups at specific points at intersection, since such a conception tends to limit the analysis to the descriptive and the static at the expense of process and change. This involves distinguishing between intersecting groups, strands, projects and policy fields.

Sixth, it is important to address alliances, coalitions and shared projects associated with multiple inequalities. These can sometimes be obscured by the concept of intersectionality. Joint projects and policies that do not separately name the supporting constituencies can be very important, but are not well captured by the concept of intersectionality. The relations may be equitable between strands or one may become dominant or hegemonic.

Seventh, the inclusion of multiple inequalities in the same policy arena can lead to a tension between wide mainstreaming and narrower non-discrimination strategies. The breadth of policy remit is an issue to consider in evaluating the significance of the implications of multiple inequalities for the quality of gender+ equality policies.

The concept of intersectionality has been important in sensitising the gender field to some implications of multiple inequalities, and lead to additional questions being inserted into the field of gender equality policies. However, in some ways it has become a force limiting the range and form of issues for enquiry. It is time to build on the strengths of the intersectionality debates and to go beyond its weaknesses.

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