

Diversity Claims-Making in a Transnational Space of Mobilization:

The Intersections of Gender and Ethnicity

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Various organizations mobilise at the transnational European level around gender and ethnicity issues. The intersectional nature of their diversity demands makes it necessary to combine particularistic claims regarding identity and European belonging with universal claims to human rights, citizenship, and inclusion.

The mobilization and political activism at the European level takes place in a particular public space constituted around the political institutionalization of the European Union (EU).¹ In this space, several processes of transnational claims-making can be discerned. Thus, organizations mobilize at the European level, for example around issues related to gender and other categories such as ethnicity. However, their ways of mobilizing and the claims they set forward differ in relation to identity based discourses. This makes for a complex combination of universalistic claims to human rights and citizenship and particularistic claims regarding identity and European belonging on behalf of specific groups. Furthermore, the claims-making does not occur detached from the EU agenda on diversity and minority issues. This article focuses on the demands made by or on behalf of ethnic minorities and migrant women in the European realm. The objective is to analyse how different

organizations deal with diversity regarding the intersectional categories of gender and ethnicity within the discursive claims-making categories made available by the institutional and political framework of the EU. It is argued that the claims-making must necessarily be complex and not straightforward as a consequence of the transnational, multilevel nature of the demands on one hand and their intersectional features, on the other.

TRANSNATIONAL CLAIMS-MAKING: UNIVERSALISTIC AND PARTICULARISTIC DEMANDS

The transnational space of mobilization in Europe has expanded parallel to the development of the European integration process. The interaction between the development of the EU as a multi-level polity and the transnational space of mobilization means that the activists, networks, and organizations operating in this space can direct their demands at the local, the regional, the nation-state, and the transnational level, i.e. the EU institutions. Different levels of interaction, of access points into the political system, and of targets of claims-making, thus, appear (Hobson et al. 2007, Soysal 1997, 2004). The effects are visible both nationally and transnationally:

As individuals and groups utilize transnational legal frameworks, discourses and forums, we expect changes in the practice of citizenship, in terms of group identities, agency and power. Trans-national dialogues among mobilized groups often result in political learning. New strategies can emerge. Trans-national venues open up new political opportunities and new brokerage partners. Perhaps most importantly, trans-national institutions offer recognition movements new forms of leverage politics, as governments become more and more integrated in structures of multi-level governance (Hobson et al. 2007: 445).

When social movements through collective agency set forward their demands vis-à-vis the state, they often do so with certain claims to voice, inclusion, and recognition. At the transnational level the movements usually draw on the discourses of the transnational institutions to seek legitimacy for their claims (Ibid.). The transnational level is different from the national because of the organization of the mobilization which is, to a certain extent, detached from a delimited territorial reference (participants do not necessarily live close to each other or share a common cultural background) and the direction of the demands. The EU is a different kind of political system than the nation-states and the channelling of the demands requires different strategies by the organizations who seek to gain influence or make themselves visible.

Soysal (1994, 1997, 2004) argues that the sites for claims-making and participation are becoming dispersed and, thus, the practices of citizenship are decoupled from national belongings. Instead they take place in a more complex context in which different levels interact. This development leads to a further decoupling of rights and identities: the collective claims and mobilization are based on particularistic group identities, drawing at the same time on universalistic discourses concerning *personhood* rights. Soysal (1994) understands particularism as the specific characteristics of collectivities, such as culture, language, and ethnicity, whereas universalism refers to a core of humanness reflected in human rights for example. The latter is derived from the transnational level where the universalistic discourses proliferate:

Paradoxically, as the legitimacy of rights shifts to the transnational level, identities pretty much remain particularistic, [...]: The same global rules and institutional frameworks that celebrate personhood and human rights at the same time naturalize collective identities around national and ethno-religious particu-

larisms. [...] Thus, while rights acquire a more universalistic form and are divorced from national belonging, giving rise to more inclusionary forms of memberships, identities often become intentionally particularistic, and exclusionary practices on the basis of identity prevail. [...] So more inclusionary forms of rights clash with more exclusionary practices of identity (Soysal 2004: 2-3).

According to Soysal this means that two parallel processes are encountered; rights are increasingly being developed at a level beyond the nation-state and claims are, at the same time, extensively related to group-based and non-universal identities, which are also encouraged and legitimized by the international institutions' focus on particularistic cultures and identities. The claims adapt to the agendas of the international institutions and the dominant discourses within these.

Contrary to Soysal's notion of postnational, universalistic discourses as the supporting background for particularistic identity claims, Koopmans and Statham (2003) argue that migrants and minorities do not organize substantially at the transnational level in their claims-making efforts, nor do they draw on supranational discourses or direct claims at the EU as an arena for mobilizing. Similarly, Hobson et al. state that "EU law has opened up some political space for a politics of recognition around ethnic and racial discrimination, yet few claims have been lodged in trans-national venues" (Hobson et al. 2007: 464). National movements and organizations do not seem to be using the EU level as leverage within the field of ethnic and racial discrimination. This is not the case, however, if we look to the transnational level as such and the organizations acting within this arena. Here the claims-making related to ethnic and racial antidiscrimination is indeed drawing on an EU framework and discourse. It should therefore be scrutinized whether the mobilization, which is

going on at a transnational level and is to a lesser degree nationally rooted, takes part in the same simultaneous dynamics of particularism and universalism as pointed out by Soysal. Further, it should be considered to which extent the intersections between gender and ethnicity as the categories upon which the mobilizations take place influence these dynamics.

There is a lack of empirical research on the interrelated dynamics of transnational mobilization and diversity claims. While extensive research has been done regarding the relationship between national demands and transnational activism, especially concerning the way in which the latter can support the former (see for instance Hobson et al. 2007), few have analysed specifically the intersections between gender and ethnicity at the transnational level (see however Williams 2003). This article aims at contributing to the analysis of transnational diversity organizations and their claims-making at the European level (see also Rolandsen Agustín and Roth forthcoming).

The analysis is based on printed and web-based document material and interviews with representatives from two organizations: the European Women's Lobby (EWL) and the Black European Women's Council (BEWC).² The former is the most important mainstream organization mobilizing around gender and women's issues in general at the European level, whereas the latter is a minority organization focusing on a gender and ethnicity-specific agenda. Both are umbrella organizations and they include the 27 member states of the EU, as well as its candidate countries, as the scope for their mobilization and activism. Founded in 1990 the EWL comprises 30 national coordination organizations and 21 international NGOs with observer status. The BEWC (founded in 2007) has members from 16 different member states and more than 30 member organizations. BEWC's activities cover networking and lobbying at the EU level as well as empowerment and

capacity building activities for its members and member organizations.

MULTIPLE DISCRIMINATION AND INTERSECTIONALITY WITHIN THE EU AND ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The EU serves as a framework for the networks at different levels. This applies both in discursive terms, when they formulate demands and policy proposals, and in a more structural sense with respect to the organization and funding of the networks.³ Regarding the discursive framework, the EU has set a diversity and antidiscrimination agenda (Squires 2009), which influences the work of the organizations in the sense that they draw on this agenda and seek to influence it at the same time. In this way, the EU policy discourses facilitate, to a certain extent, minority claims and mobilization. The treaties recognize the importance of minority rights protection and human rights as well as the protection of cultural and linguistic diversity. The EU is often articulated by the organizations as the main space for gaining visibility and recognition at the transnational level and strategic policy claims are made, which fit the overall institutional agenda in an attempt to gain resonance (Rolandsen Agustín 2008). When the BEWC defines itself as an organization of Black European Women (i.e. Black women living in Europe) and argues that:

This definition is part of the political strategy of Black European Women to position themselves in the political landmark of the EU, and claim and reinforce their rights to have access to goods and services, and to take part in all sectors of European society” (www.bewnet.eu).

The strategy is not only about gaining general visibility but also clearly developed in relation to the EU institutions and their language.

The EU antidiscrimination policies, and especially Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty concerning discrimination on the basis of sex, race/ethnic origin, religion/belief, disability, age and sexual orientation,⁴ have come to serve as the main framework within which organizations set forward claims regarding intersectionality. The European Commission (EC) has developed a preference for a multiple discrimination approach, which has its roots in the theoretical development of intersectionality issues and civil society advocacy concerning these aspects. The EU agenda has modified these theoretical ideas, however, by including several grounds of discrimination in its legislative framework without looking at them in a truly intersectional way. Theoretically a multiple discrimination approach views the inequalities as additive whereas an intersectional perspective considers them to be mutually constitutive, i.e. the sum is different than its parts added together. Though the EU policies continue to lack an intersectional content the tendency is to move towards an integrated rather than a separate approach, which considers several forms of discrimination together. This shows how the concepts develop and are modified in the interaction between civil society activists, lobbyists, and the political institutions (EC 2004, 2007, Lombardo and Verloo 2009).

The two organizations analysed here share the aim to improve EU policies and legislation on intersecting inequalities or discriminations. The BEWC argues that the implementation of the legal framework on multiple discrimination is insufficient since discrimination continues to exist (BEWC 2007) and the policies remain mainly symbolic (BEWC interview, November 2008). The BEWC's general focus is on multiple discrimination and particularly gendered racism or the intersection between racism (as Black), sexism (as women), and social exclusion (as migrants or minorities). Already in 1998 the EWL published a report

on the different kinds of discriminations experienced by Black, ethnic minority, and migrant women (EWL 1998). The organization has had the combating of racism and gender discrimination as a priority since 2001 (EWL 2001). The strengthened focus on these issues in recent years can be seen as an effect of the EU agenda on multiple discrimination more than an internal policy development: “We have to do multiple discrimination, and we’re doing multiple discrimination [...] It’s a challenge for any organisation” (EWL interview, December 2007). One of the challenges highlighted by the EWL is to avoid homogenizing the category of women and also look at the differences. The organization has a rather developed approach to intersectionality both as a theoretical issue and as a policy practice (see for instance EWL 2001 and Vassiliadou 2008) and it openly criticizes the EU for its legislative framework regarding intersectional discriminations:

Despite the fact that intersectional discrimination has been recognised, the concerned international bodies have not developed corresponding legal instruments. As a result, the intersectional experience of discrimination is not recognized and treated properly in legal and institutional frameworks built around single types of discrimination because discriminations are seen as one-dimensional and as affecting all people – men and women – in the same way (Vassiliadou 2008).

Intersectionality is explicitly promoted by the EWL as a necessary policy strategy though it is recognized that it is complex and that it is still a challenge for the EWL to adopt an intersectional approach, taking into account other categories than gender (Vassiliadou 2008). The inequality categories typically taken into account by the organizations are gender, ethnic origin or race, and, at times, religion. Both the EWL and the BEWC point to the dual discrimination to which minority women can be

subjected as women in their ethnic communities and as Black/ethnic minorities in the general society (Achaleke 2007, EWL 2001). The potential legislative discrimination as immigrants is also a concern, especially since it can lead to other forms of discrimination such as social exclusion, poverty, and lack of access to the formal labour market (EWL 2001, 2004).

There are divergences in the organizations’ approaches to multiple discrimination and intersectionality. The BEWC clearly has a strengthened focus on the identity aspects of the issue and refrains from keeping its claims to a pragmatic political agenda and legislative initiatives solely:

“These diversity identities which you can find in one person and to be able to say: okay, this person can say ‘I am a woman’, ‘I am a lesbian’, ‘I am handicapped’, ‘I am old’, you know, the six grounds of discrimination. We have to start looking at them from a different perspective and say these are six identities which may be the identity of one person (BEWC interview, November 2008).

The BEWC focuses on multiple community belonging and identities as well as legislative discrimination (BEWNET 2007). This corresponds to the way in which the diversity claims set forward by the organization also highlight the interrelation between identity claims related to recognition and legislative demands concerning the policy framework (see below).⁵

To sum up, the EWL continues to be the most challenging actor in its insistence on the adequacy of an explicit intersectionality approach whereas others, such as the BEWC, use the EU language (‘multiple discrimination’) though the policy content of their proposals may include intersectional dimensions as well.

DIVERSITY DEMANDS: RIGHTS OR RECOGNITION?

The diversity claims set forward by the organizations differ substantially, and different strategies can be identified. The first kind of demands concerns migrant women and their rights. It is articulated in relation to the immigration policies of the EU. This strategy has several objectives: it criticizes the EU approach to illegal immigration (strengthening external borders) and it aims to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach to immigration and integration policies. It advocates women's rights as migrants to a legal status making them economically and legally independent of their husbands and facilitating their integration into the formal labour market. This is inserted into a human rights framework. It looks at the specific role of women in migration processes and seeks to improve it. This kind of demands is mainly set forward by the EWL (see for instance 2006 and 2007):

By maintaining a 'gender neutral' approach to immigration, women's human rights and the experiences and needs of women are being ignored in the current debates and policies around immigration. [...] A gender aware approach to immigration policy introduces a shift from the predominant view of female immigrants as simply the wives and children of male immigrants to incorporating an understanding of women's human rights and of the unique experiences of women immigrants themselves (EWL 2004: 3).

The demands focus on the differential effects on women as immigrants and aim to ensure their rights as universal human rights within EU immigration policies. This is combined with the overall aim of the EWL, namely that of collaborating with or influencing the EU institutions to adopt a gender perspective on all policies. Equality between women and men in terms of their situation as immigrants should be achieved

through an individualization of rights which would lead to the independence of immigrant women. There is a focus on legal status as the key to develop equality between men and women on one hand, and between immigrants and EU citizens on the other. Once these basic rights have been achieved through EU immigration policies the conditions for the improvement of the immigrants' situation through labour market integration could be settled as well. The kind of diversity claims set forward here are not only related to human rights as an overall frame, and as such potentially defined as universal claims according to Soysal's theoretization as explained above. The claims are also articulated around a notion of individual rights (which are furthermore linked to an employment focus). The immigrant women, on behalf of whom the claims are set forward even though they continue to be addressed as external to the articulation of policy demands in the documents, are perceived implicitly as individual subjects for whom individual rights must be achieved and protected in order for them to gain independence both as women and as immigrants.

The second kind of demands articulated by the organizations is directed towards the recognition of rights and inclusion in general. On one hand they revolve around the integration aspects of immigration, such as the challenges of a multicultural society and the objective of social cohesion. On the other hand the recognition demands also relate to issues of belonging and identity. The BEWC underlines the importance of minority women gaining visibility and respect in a European society characterized by plurality. They do not wish to be considered as 'the others', the migrants, but advocate for their recognition as citizens and their inclusion into society:

Our main challenge is to identify and address critical needs of Black European Women and children, by raising public awareness both at

the national and international level underlining the challenges faced by Black Communities across Europe ensuring that we are recognized on the agenda of the European Union. [...] Together, we will have a stronger voice and a stronger impact and only together, can we bring about change. We can empower one another by working closely to achieve our goal of full inclusion and respect (BEWC 2008: 2).

The BEWC insists on looking at diversity as a positive value and it underlines migrant and minority women's contributions to the European society. But most of all, their demands are articulated around identity-related claims and aspects of belonging. This relates both to the sense of belonging to a European identity at the individual level (i.e. inclusion), and the definition of the European society as plural at a social level:

European, when you use this phrase honestly what picture comes to mind? I would say that 99% of you with the exception of the members of the [BEWC] see a Caucasian person of different ethnic background but with features familiar to yourselves in some way. We are hoping that in time we can be included in your description too. Our aim is for European society to begin to include in its definition of itself all of its members, to also include those that don't look like you (Jarvis 2008).

These claims are also related to a human rights framework, but they differ from the previous ones in that there is a heightened focus on citizenship and inclusion. The categorization of the women in question as 'migrants' is substituted with the construction of the minority women as European 'citizens'. At the same time, the 'citizen' category is constructed in parallel with that of the specific minority speaking, namely the Black European women of the BEWC:

"Many women who migrate to Europe they

have been given lots of names, they have been defined in different ways, they are foreigners, they are strangers, they are 'autocotone' in other countries, they are immigrants, they are all these names, they are Black women, they are African women, so there is this big confusion and now we come to say 'we are Black European women'. So we still have to convince the women. That's one of the biggest challenges, to tell them: being a Black European does not mean that you are less African. It does not reduce anything in your identity. It's just a strategic working definition and it's a future definition for children who are being born here" (BEWC interview, November 2008).

The self-definition is important here as is its explicit relation to a clear political strategy, i.e. that of placing the self-defined group on the European agenda. This means that the identity claims and the policy claims go hand in hand and complement each other in a very conscious effort to gain recognition and influence the agenda at the same time. Particularism and universalism converge since the group identity interacts with, and is seen as a strategic way to gain resonance for, the universal claim to citizenship rights and social and political inclusion into the European society. The subject on behalf of which the claims are made is a collective one: it is not the individual migrant woman who is the centre of attention here but the collective group of minority women.

In conclusion, the diversity demands set forward mainly by the EWL are strategic policy claims within a clearly defined human rights framework, usually related to EU immigration policies and, as such, politically-pragmatically oriented. The BEWC, on the other hand, makes empowerment-related claims concerning recognition and belonging within a citizenship frame. The first set of demands has a migrant women's focus and the claims-making is made on their behalf. However, the second set of

demands is seeking recognition for minority women, not as migrants but as European citizens. This also means that the first kind of demands focuses more on gender as an inequality category and women's independence than the second, which on the other hand highlights the ethnic minority, as a group, to a larger extent. The inclusion and exclusion mechanisms are, in a similar way, perceived differently: in the first case, the inclusion implies legal status and rights, whereas the second covers both citizenship rights and recognition. In the latter case, the full inclusion into the European society in both aspects is perceived to be the solution for the minority organizations.

CONCLUSIONS

The main organizations dealing with the intersections of gender and ethnicity at the European level are influenced by the EU agenda surrounding these issues in the sense that the EU, to a certain extent, structures the possibilities for diversity claims-making. At the same time, it is one of the main aims of the organizations to influence the EU agenda and they are successful in doing so, for instance in relation to intersectionality. The division between universal and particular claims is not clear-cut and there is a tendency to mix both aspects in the demands articulated by the organizations. Universal claims to human rights, citizenship and inclusion are set forward by the organizations and this is backed up by the EU institutional discourse on minority rights protection. However, the identity claims are not completely particularistic and exclusionary given the fact that they are mainly set forward in relation to the aim of inclusion into the European society. Particular needs and the combating of particular kinds of discrimination are addressed, but this is considered in the overall inclusionary perspective of the sense of belonging as Europeans. The discrimination is 'measured' in relation to full citizen-

ship status and recognition rather than particular cultural claims. Equality and inclusion are the objectives and as such all the claims can be considered to be marked by a universalistic tendency. This can be interpreted as an effect of the intersectional nature of the diversity claims in which the inequality producing categories converge: the intersection of gender and ethnicity creates this complex dualism. Both the gender and the ethnicity perspective contribute with a universal dimension since the aim is women's rights and citizenship rights respectively. However, the diversity claims set forward on behalf of or by this group make these universal dimensions converge with particular ones since it is a specific group of women (ethnic minority women) demanding the policies and society as such to address the particular needs they have as women from a visible minority who is being discriminated against. These demands cannot be understood in the same way as Soysal's notion of national and ethno-religious particularistic identities because the claims-making here is taking place at a truly transnational level that is detached from the national one. As such there is a higher correspondence between the transnational rights and discourses and the transnational identity claims to be recognized and included into the European society. The postnational space in which the organizations mobilize is different: these are not national or nationally oriented subjects but actual transnational ones both in their ways of organizing and in the rights and identity claims they articulate.

NOTES

1. The main focus of the article is on the EU and the transnational level. The term 'European' refers to the EU of the 27 member states even though this is a limited understanding of Europe as a broader (geographical or political) entity.
2. This article is part of a larger PhD project on

civil society participation in EU gender policy making where I analyse transnational mobilization and channels of civil society interaction with the main EU institutions.

3. The EU supports the organizations financially to different extent 83% of EWL's budget comes from an EC grant under the Progress programme. The BEWC receives funding for specific activities from different foundations (such as Filia and The Global Funds for Women) as well as the EC programme Europe for Citizens.

4. The antidiscrimination principles of the Amsterdam Treaty are covered by Article 19 of the Lisbon Treaty. Furthermore, Article 10 of the new treaty envisages the mainstreaming of these principles into other policies of the EU.

5. The identitybased claims set forward by the BEWC are also reflected in the demands for voice and empowerment of minority women, which lead to the need of self-organization and self-representation. In this regard, self-organization can be considered both a reaction to minority women not feeling properly included in majority organizations and a means of empowerment in itself (see Rolandsen and Roth forthcoming).

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SUMMARY

Diversity Claims-Making in a Transnational Space of Mobilization: The Intersections of Gender and Ethnicity
Various organisations mobilise at the trans-

national, European level around gender and ethnicity issues, setting forward demands both by and on behalf of ethnic minority and migrant women. The organisations deal with diversity in terms of gender and ethnicity in different ways, but they all influence and are influenced by the EU framework. The intersectional nature of their diversity demands makes it necessary to combine particularistic claims regarding identity and European belonging with universal claims to human rights, citizenship and inclusion. The claims-making of the organisations is characterised by this complexity due to the transnational, multilevel nature of the demands, on one hand, and their intersectional features, on the other.

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