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'Changing core business? Institutionalised feminisms and intersectionality in Belgium and Germany

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Chapter 4

CHANGING CORE BUSINESS? INSTITUTIONALISED FEMINISMS AND INTERSECTIONALITY IN BELGIUM AND GERMANY

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Feminisms look back on a long history of movements, some of which became institutionalised and firmly embedded in their political system. This chapter takes stock of institutionalised feminisms in the form of national women's umbrella organizations by comparing Belgium and Germany. While both countries have an increasingly diverse population, and while institutionalized feminisms embrace the idea of representing all women, the various women's councils seem to struggle with a shift to a more intersectional approach. Their management structure, priorities, activities, practices, and discourse seem to reflect little intersectionality, notwithstanding the different history and position of the women's councils in the two countries. The chapter documents this lack of an intersectional approach by looking into the evolution of the women's councils over time and the expression of any form of intersectionality in the current descriptive and substantive representation by the women's councils. By scrutinizing intersectionality in national women's umbrella organizations which function as a node between diverse women's organizations and different levels of policy-making, it illuminates how and when exclusion and inclusion play out and how intersectionality shapes (or not) alliances, practices, and discourses.

INTRODUCTION

While the institutionalisation of feminism in state institutions and other social movements, for instance, the LGBTQI movement, and their different foci are well researched (Beckwith 2013; McBride and Mazur 2013), we know astonishingly little about institutionalised non-state organizations originating from these movements such as national women's umbrella organizations. In this chapter we concentrate on such women's organizations often presented as successors of the first wave women's movements and ask to what extent they rely on intersectionality as a repertoire of inclusivity and a strategy for coalition-building (Evans and Lépinard in this volume). Throughout the last decades, research on intersectional aspects of mobilization (or the lack thereof; cf. Crenshaw 1991; Nyhagen, Predelli and Halsaa 2012) grew in importance and illustrated the failures and successes also of women's or feminist movements in becoming more inclusive (Bassel and Emejulu 2014; Mohanty 2003; Irvine et al 2019; Lépinard 2014), but again without paying much attention to national women's umbrella organizations.

We set intersectionality as a pre-condition to substantively represent the complexity of gender equality, to avoid marginalizing more vulnerable groups, and to build a larger and more sustainable movement (Irvine et al 2019). In other words, without an intersectional approach, women's organizations are sticking to "Oppression Olympics" (Yuval-Davis 2012), lose impact due to their limited scope, and in the long run might be less able to represent equality issues. Notwithstanding this claim, we do not expect to find much of intersectional practices and repertoires. Rather we find that intersectionality is at best used as a rhetorical tool and in non-performative ways in the national women's umbrella organizations.

In our analysis we examine the two Belgian Women's Councils (Conseil des Femmes Francophone de Belgique: CFFB; Vrouwenraad: VR) and the National Council of German Women's Organizations (Deutscher Frauenrat: DFR). Women's umbrella organizations are

important for a variety of reasons. Political institutions such as government and parliaments accept them as main representatives of women's interests and have established their participation in policy-making by inviting them as experts to hearings, meetings and public consultation. This policy-making participation makes them a likely node for norm diffusion in two directions: from civil society to politics and vice versa. Furthermore, they have the potential to mobilize for gender equality policies by organizing their members as a visible public pressure group. Finally, they are a crucial connection between the national and the supranational level, because they are the national coordination of the European Women's Lobby (EWL), the biggest supranational women's organization in the EU, with the possibility of influencing supranational policies that return to the national level through hard or soft law. Our perspective includes examining their possible institutional privilege in participating in policy-making. Women's organizations mark their territory by defining who can become a member at which cost, by structuring policy positions, by forging compromise positions (possibly) at the cost of those with less power or resources in the organization, and by acting as primary contact on invitation by state institutions and other stakeholders. Due to their long history and position, women's umbrella organizations have been recognized as core actor on behalf of women's interests and posit privileged institutional access in the form of advisory roles.

Belgium and Germany are good cases for examining intersectionality in women's organizations: they have long-standing social movements founded in the wake of first wave feminism. Both are nowadays organized in overarching umbrella organizations, bringing together many different groups and initiatives in countries with an increasingly diverse population. With our chapter we contribute to the research on intersectionality in movements by investigating the often neglected traditional women's organizations as core civil society actors and policy-makers (Irvine et al 2019; Lépinard 2014). Understanding the historical

context and its impact on the desire (and ability) of women's organizations to pursue intersectional praxis is utterly important.

Our 'thick description' aims to trace how far the organizations are able to challenge their own power relations in the organization by adopting intersectional praxis. We distinguish between descriptive aspects of intersectionality (office staff, member organizations) and substantive aspects that would mean "doing intersectionality" (policy papers, hearings, conferences), to identify specific forms of privilege and marginalisation and the extent to which intersectionality becomes visible in their organizational structure and intersectional claims appear in their output.

What do we mean when we say women's movement as opposed to a feminist movement? We follow Beckwith (2013) in that a women's movement may refer to any women-led movement organizing around gendered identity while it is not part of state institutions. Feminist movements, instead, also pursue the goal of changing gendered hierarchies and improve the status of women (McBride and Mazur 2013). Thus, we see the national women's umbrella organizations as stemming from a tradition of women's but not necessarily feminist movements.

EXPLAINING WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS ENGAGEMENT WITH INTERSECTIONALITY

Why do women's organizations (not) adopt an intersectional perspective? Literature suggests different explanatory perspectives for women's movements success (and failures) regarding institutionalization, privileged positions in policy-making and their engagement with intersectional aspects. In comparing French and Canadian women's movements, Lépinard (2014, 898-899) shows that they exhibit not a single but four different repertoires in dealing

with intersectionality – intersectional recognition, gender first, individual recognition, and intersectional solidarity – of which some seem more apt to foster the project of an inclusive feminist political agenda than others. Intersectional recognition resembles well what Crenshaw (1991) defined as structural and political intersectionality; intersectional solidarity leads to converting minority women's specific claims into existing feminist vocabulary, while the other two repertoires engage with differences and diversity in a less comprehensive way. Lépinard (2014, 881-885) emphasises the advantages of comparative analysis in carving out conditions favouring or impeding intersectionality and proposes to distinguish between single axis and dual axis as well as between advocacy and service-oriented movements. As for Belgium and Germany, we look at single-axis advocacy women's umbrella organizations and explore two different national contexts.

Next to categorizing women's movements along different repertoires, historical paths, top-down and bottom-up pressures, and the political opportunity structures influence different ways how women's organizations engage with intersectionality. The *long history* and connected specific national context of women's organizations make it likely that some intersectional aspects are picked up more than others, thereby privileging often the needs of majority groups over those of minority groups (Marx Ferree 2012; Nyhagen, Predelli and Halsaa 2012; Strolovitch 2007). Historical institutionalism allows addressing such developments by asking about path-dependencies in institutionalizing women's organizations.

National women's umbrella organizations comprise a broad variety of different member organizations and this *bottom-up* approach shapes their common ground, their common identity. How are conflicts between member organizations solved and whose position is privileged and whose dismissed? Will different intersections, for instance catholic-bourgeois

vs. LGBTQI vs. domestic workers, clash or can conflicts be mediated and dissolved (Wiercx 2011; Verloo 2006; Yuval-Davis 2012)?

Likewise, norm diffusion from the supranational level can pressure *top-down* in engaging with intersectional aspects. The German and Belgium women's umbrella organization are members of the EWL. Founded in 1990, the EWL is the biggest supranational women's umbrella organization with national women's umbrella organizations and – more recently – other supranational civil society organizations as members. The EWL receives public funding, has privileged access to several EU committees, expert groups and hearings, and was often criticised as being exclusionary and solely representing the interests of white, middle-class, well-educated heterosexual women (Ahrens 2019; Strid 2014). Stubbergaard (2015) emphasised recent changes to more intersectionality, for instance, by EWL creating the European Network of Migrant Women and upholding strong ties with it, but not with the European Forum of Muslim Women; one of the reasons being the clear 'gender first'-approach of the EWL. Nevertheless, we would expect that an opening up of the EWL for intersectionality on the supranational level exerts pressure on national members to pay more attention to intersectionality (see for Germany Marx Ferree 2012, 210).

Finally, social movement theory suggests that the national *political opportunity structure* defines the scope of action for social movements such as women's movements (Beckwith 2013; Knappe and Lang 2014). Usually, political institutions define the policy-making agenda, not women's organizations, and only a "window of opportunity" allows for considerable change. Until then, organizations' activities consist mainly of lobbying in policy-making and less in contentious mass mobilization, a result from trade-off between access to policy-making and protest (Sanchez Salgado 2014). As an effect, women's organizations react instead of act in policy processes, not least when they receive funding from the institutions (Sanchez Salgado 2014; Stubbergaard 2015). Undeniably, resources play

a role for how organizations (can) operate. Organizations receiving limited resources can find it hard to cover intersectionality to a greater extent. In addition, limited resources can lead to competition and conflict between organizations working on different grounds of discrimination (Hancock 2007; Verloo 2006) with the effect that none of them adopts intersectionality. Nevertheless, insufficient resources not necessarily lead to competition and conflict and satisfactory resources do not automatically lead to adopting intersectionality (Ahrens 2019).

With view to the specific political opportunity structure defining women's organizations' scope of influence, we would expect a better intersectional representation in Belgium, because of the national tradition to create consensus among different interests and the multilingual setting which led the different communities to dispose of far-reaching autonomy so as to be able to reconcile the particular needs of each community. We could expect that a context in which much attention is paid to diverse needs and interests makes accepting intersectionality more likely as a means to accommodate diverse needs.

CASES, METHODS, DATA

The Belgian and German cases both originate from first wave feminism and are nowadays organized in overarching umbrella organizations, bringing together many different groups and initiatives in countries with an increasingly diverse population. Nevertheless, the two countries look back on different trajectories regarding women's rights. The German women's movement was successful in gaining universal suffrage after WWI, while universal suffrage has never been a core claim of the Belgian women's movement (Meier 2012) and was only adopted after WWII. While the German gender equality regime with its strong male breadwinner model was only recently weakened in Germany (Henninger and von Wahl

2018), Belgium overcame it already in the previous century with half of the female population in the age group 25 to 54 working by the mid-1980s (IGVM 2011). Belgium was from the start a multi-ethnic state with religious cleavages and a colonial heritage impacting its society after WWII, which makes it a likely case for intersectional aspects to be adopted in women's councils. Germany, on the other hand, is a less likely case for intersectionality given that societal cleavages occurred mainly along class with gender aspects subordinated or ignored (Marx Ferree 2012) and the idea of being an immigrant country integrating new citizens was strongly rejected until recently.

Because of the language divide Belgium comprises two women's councils, respectively the Conseil de Femmes Francophones de Belgique (CFFB) and the Vrouwenraad (VR).[i] The VR has about 40 members, the CFFB about 60, which is mainly due to the fact that it counts more local sections of member organizations. But in both cases they range from political parties' women's groups, trade union sections, professional organizations, organizations targeting specific groups of women, but also broader organizations such as certain public administrations or organizations such as Amnesty International. Both have close ties with the EWL (Lafon 2017a) and run its Belgian coordination, and both are members of the International Women's Council. Both umbrella organizations also have a similar structure. The everyday functioning is ensured by a director and a small staff. The director works together with the executive committee, preparing all major decisions. A specific feature of the CFFB and of the VR is that the executive committee is chaired by a president who alternatingly comes from the different ideological branches of the Belgian political spectrum, non-democratic parties excluded. This means that the women's councils are chaired by women with a particular tie to one of the political parties. Finally, there is the general meeting of members, which is the supreme decision-making body. Members have to adhere to the goals and values of the women's council as expressed in their statutes, the bottom line of it

being the promotion of gender equality. Both the CFFB and the VR receive structural funding (as opposed to project funding), not from the federal government but from the sub-state government of the same language group in charge of community related matters. These are respectively the Federation of Wallonia - Brussels and the Flemish Community. Given the stronger financial situation of the latter, the VR disposes of more means than the CFFB. Both women's councils also obtain project funding from their government and sometimes also from other governments of the same language group (Celis and Meier 2017). Therefore, the CFFB and the VR are both well embedded within their own language group and also have international ties. They have a less strong and evident position at the federal level, unless they work together. But both are members of the federal Advisory Council of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women.

The DFR[ii] comprises 60 member organizations that range from trade union sections, church-affiliated women's groups, lesbian groups, to migrant women groups. Prerequisites for DFR membership are an at least 90% female membership share or independent decision-making and representative bodies for female members in an organization, more than 300 individual members in at least five Bundesländer and two years of experience on the federal level. Applicants cannot simultaneously be members of other DFR member organisation; the general assembly decides with two-thirds majority on applications. Leadership is organized into a board (volunteers) and a central office with an executive director, and currently twelve employees.

The DFR is a member of a variety of organizations in civil society, public administration expert groups, prize committees and organizations' boards. It is the official German representative to the EWL, a member of the European Academy for Women in Politics and Economy, and a founding member of the national Forum Equal Pay Day. It sits on the advisory board of the Federal Antidiscrimination Agency, and in expert groups or advisory

boards of several ministries, including the monitoring committee for implementing the European Social Fund in Germany. The DFR is the only German women's organization receiving structural funding from the federal government (Icken 2002). Hence, the DFR is nationally and internationally well embedded in networks, interest groups and civil society and – compared to other German women's organizations – privileged as regards access to policy-making and to funding. According to its website, the DFR completely reorganized itself in 2016 with the goal to be better able to respond to today's societal challenges. Since then, the member meeting adopts an annual work program with core topics, in 2016-2017 for instance, refugees and integration, women's health, and federal elections.

For analysing what role intersectionality plays in the women's umbrella organizations, we used secondary literature for understanding history and for the current situation on publicly accessible primary data mainly from the organization's websites. Data comprises statutes, member organizations information, organizations' team and leadership, annual reports, website content, newsletters, press releases, conference proceedings, and policy briefs.

We looked for signs of intersectionality in organizing the women's councils (descriptive representation; for the offices and also for the member organizations) and in doing intersectionality (substantive representation; for policy issues like employment, migration, family), and aimed at detecting if the organizations challenge their own power relations and privileges. In the following we present, first, the historical account of intersectional engagement as this – in our view – determines profoundly whether how, what and why the three organisations become more inclusive nowadays. Next, we provide snapshots of how the women's councils deal with intersectionality descriptively and substantively.

INSTITUTIONALIZING NATIONAL WOMEN'S COUNCILS

Belgium: from one to two councils – gaining and losing intersectional dimensions

The Belgian Women's Council was founded during the heydays of the first wave, in 1905, by Marie Popelin, a Belgian lawyer, well-known for the fact that she had not been accepted at the bar for being a woman because she was 'too weak' to exercise such a function (the so-called Affair Popelin of 1892). She was also very active in the international women's movement and organized an international congress in Belgium in 1897. The Belgian delegates at that gathering decided to join in one national organization but it took them some years to put their idea into operation. The Belgian Women's Council brought together the League of Women's Rights (founded in the wake of the affair Popelin), the Belgian Society for The Improvement of The Position of Women and the Union of Belgian Women Against Alcoholism. These organizations and by extension the Belgian Women's Council were pluralistic, but many of the members were middle-class, liberal, anti-clerical and secular. It thus had a narrow ideological scope and agenda, the range of gendered needs and interests and solutions meant to tackle them was limited. This did not facilitate the pursuit of an intersectional praxis (which was actually the case for all Belgian women's movement organizations). This particular composition has to be understood in the light of Belgian politics of that time, very much characterized by an ongoing struggle between liberal vehemently secular anti-clerical and catholic forces, and the rise of the socialists since the late 1880s. Feminists with a socialist profile were mainly active within the Belgian Workers' Party, founded in 1885, more particularly the National Federation of Socialist Women. Catholic, often clerical, circles also founded initiatives to promote the position of women, most of which were mainly anti-socialist initiatives. Each major ideological tendency tried to tie citizens, and thus also women, to a broad network of organizations. This strong pillarization of the Belgian society explains the particular character of the Belgian Women's Council at its foundation. Actually, both catholic and socialist feminists took a distance from

the Belgian Women's Council and only joined decades later. In the beginning the Belgian Women's Council regrouped mainly autonomous women's organizations, groups not part of one of the pillars characterizing Belgian political and social life (Celis and Meier 2007).

Organizations such as the League of Women's Rights and the Belgian Society for The Improvement of The Position of Women strived for formal de jure and economic equality of the sexes, including the equality of men and women within marriage and women's full access to the labour market (including liberal professions and the public sector). These were considered more important than political rights. The Union of Belgian Women Against Alcoholism was the only founding organization of the Belgian Women's Council striving for female suffrage, as it would allow women to make politicians tackle the problem of alcoholism. Many Liberals (and Socialists) feared that mainly the Catholics would benefit from female suffrage and remained low profile on this topic, which led to an atypical situation whereby mainly the Catholics defended female suffrage in Belgium (Meier 2012).

After some early political victories, the Belgian Women's Council suspended its activities during WWI and remained low profile until the mid-1930s, when the liberal Marthe Boël was elected president. She chaired the Belgian Women's Council until 1952 (in combination with the presidency of the International Women's Council from 1936 to 1947). During WWII activities were low profile. After WWII, education, women's access to all segments of the labour market, equal pay and the subordinate position of married women remained high on the agenda. The National Women's Council also strived for their full political rights by then. It broadened its number of permanent committees or working groups, and started organizing conferences from 1950 onwards. The number of member organizations rose and the women's organizations of the major pillars, mainly catholic and socialist joined.

The second feminist wave led to the foundation of many new women's groups, broadening the horizon of topics to abortion, but also drugs and health issues, the position of lesbian

women, and more recently prostitution, rape and gender based violence, many of which were also picked up by the Belgian Women's Council. Many of these topics led to tensions within all segments of the Belgian women's movement (the issue of abortion even led to an institutional crisis and a 24 hours abdication of the King in 1990), especially with organizations having a catholic basis or catholic members. A less controversial issue was the descriptive representation of women, the struggle for gender quotas and parity democracy, notwithstanding the fact that many liberal feminists were not in favour of it (De Weerd 1980).

However, in organizational terms it is the rising language cleavage that marked the Belgian Women's Council most. From the 1960s onwards the struggle between Flemish and French actors dominated the political scene. It led to a linguistic split of (nearly) the entire political spectrum – parties, other civil society organizations, the media, public administrations and services – and finally a federalization of Belgium in the early 1990s (Deschouwer 2012). This evolution also marked the Belgian Women's Council. In 1974, during the heydays of the second wave, the Flemish and French wing of the Belgian Women's Council developed a self-contained structure and in 1979 they split into the CFFB and the VR. Over the years, the two monolingual umbrella organizations followed a different route. The VR developed into a stronger and more professional organization than the CFFB, supported by extensive public funding by the Flemish Community, especially from the mid-1990s onwards when the sub-state level was fully operational. Another factor facilitating the professionalisation of the VR resides in the adoption of the open method of coordination (OMC)[iii] by the Flemish government from 2005 onwards (Celis and Meier 2011). Inspired by this European *modus operandi*, and in order to give shape to its gender mainstreaming policies, the Flemish government adopted an OMC cycle, which made the VR a structural consulting partner for the Flemish government, providing it with stability and permanent access to the government.

The CFFB is less structurally connected to the government and maintained more of a civil society organization character.

While the Belgian Women's Council initially hosted mainly middle class, liberal, secular and anti-clerical women's organizations, it evolved into a pluralist and more intersectional umbrella organization once the large catholic and socialist women's organizations joined. Taking into consideration a broader diversity of women, it was also more open towards a broader range of intersections and their political and social consequences. This was even reinforced when the political parties saw their own women's groups emerge, most of which joined the umbrella organization of their language group. The CFFB and VR lost part of their intersectional dimension when splitting into monolingual umbrella organizations, thereby subordinating the concept of women to that of language groups. But both umbrella organizations further broadened their scope, to women with a non-Belgian background, and to lesbian women. This did not go without major tensions as will be explained in the next section.

Germany[iv]: the DFR – closed doors for intersectional aspects

Over time, all German women's movements became institutionalised and part of policy-making, yet, the processes differed widely for the different waves (Marx Ferree 2012). The origin of the German women's movements is simultaneously characterized by the joint struggle for universal suffrage and social and citizen rights while strong divisions and mobilizations occurred along class lines; class was the dominating intersectional aspect in Germany and other categories were almost (made) invisible until the 1980s (Marx Ferree 2012; Weber 2015). While the Weimar Republic brought universal suffrage, abortion as an element of women's rights found no broad support in parliament and, in conjunction with the German male breadwinner model, excluded women and their movements from the public sphere. The situation deteriorated during the fascist period (1933-1945) when women's

movements either dissolved themselves or were replaced by fascist women's organizations (Marx Ferree 2012, 38-43). Immediately after WWII, multiple local women's movements and organizations emerged facing broader organizational problems due to legal restrictions on associations in the three sectors governed by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States, and also due to cleavages about movement issues (Icken 2002, 52-54). The 1950s brought the foundation of the "Informationsdienst für Frauenfragen" (Information Service for Women) in the American sector, and the "Deutscher Frauenring" (German Women's Circle) in the British Sector that merged as DFR in 1969 (Icken 2002). Many of the member organizations were successors of pre-war conservative organizations or church-based, focused on family issues and civic education instead of interfering with (party) politics, and opposed socialist women's movements that were prevalent in the sector governed by the Soviet Union (Icken 2002, 52-76; Marx Ferree 2012, 44-46). Hence, the DFR was a quite old-fashioned and conservative organization, satisfied with the formal principle of equality between men and women included in the new German constitution.

The second wave movement organizations clashed with the DFR not only about the concept of motherhood but also about the institutionalised involvement in politics (Marx Ferree 2012). They rejected the DFR as bourgeois women's movement, and instead linked up with Marxist traditions and the proletarian women's movement; the latter not well represented by the DFR (Gerhard 1985). According to Sabine Lang (2007) the NGOization that took place in the German feminist movement from the 1980s onwards changed little in this regard. Lang (2007, 138f) identified three distinct organizational clusters: (1) the DFR as the accepted centralized representative of German women's civil society in politics; (2) smaller and decentralized grassroot projects organizing, like women shelter's and other services and dependent on willing local politics to provide public funding; (3) 'femocrats' and feminist or women's advocates that work within state institutions, parties, and universities.

The positions of the DFR regarding engagement in politics changed over time as did the preference for the male breadwinner model, making the DFR a little more "liberal-leaning (…) in protests for gender equality in pay and employment (Marx Ferree 2012, 210). The change was partly related to the new supranational EWL and its – from a DFR perspective – progressive stance on gender equality (ibd., 211). The DFR strongly lobbied for establishing the EWL and became the primary German representative to it (Icken 2002, 139). Simultaneously, the DFR became more "permeable" (Icken 2002, 165; 190f); its members became more numerous and diverse, for instance with lesbian as well as single parents organizations joining, and through engagement during re-unification. Nonetheless, becoming a member of the DFR was not always easy given the regulations (limited to organizations with individual membership; certain number of members required) and membership fees that make it difficult for (local) organizations operating with limited funding (Icken 2002).

Next to Lang's (2007) three clusters promoting women's rights, the German public administration as well as the DFR was less receptive to certain intersectional aspects. The Aktionsbündnis muslimischer Frauen Deutschland (AmF; Action Coalition of Muslim Women), for instance, had to fight hard to be acknowledged as representative organization and was still not invited to core expert groups. Weber (2015, 29) traces this development to the way in which religious difference, specifically Islam, is racialized in Germany. She highlights that ideas of intersectionality were already present in German feminist thought in the 1980s and women of colour and migrant heritage carried out the majority of such research; a contribution often simply neglected by white German feminists (Weber 2015, 27f; see also Marx Ferree 2012). As for the DFR, female migrant organizations were still not listed as members in 2002 (Stoehr and Pawlowski 2002); and the AmF, for instance, registered formally as association to prove DFR eligibility (minimum 300 individual members in 5 Bundesländer, 90% female members, two year federal activities). Likewise,

intersectional queer and/or feminist activism in Germany increased considerably with foci on different intersections and clearly outside the institutionalised women's organizations even though also a (neo)liberal feminism appeared simultaneously (Degele and Winker 2010).

The development of the internet also impacted mobilization and communication activities of the DFR. Knappe and Lang (2014), examining differences in the British and German women's movements, found that networks among German women's movements are highly centralized and institutionalized as well as stratified along certain issues; the DFR was the second important actor next to the Federal Ministry for Family, Seniors, Women and Youth, with all other actors having much fewer network links (Knappe and Lang 2014, 366f). The overall set up of the German network affects its strategies, with more one-way-information-providing than interactions among members, leading even to almost total silence in recent online mobilisations around sexual harassment. Knappe and Lang (2014, 375) point out that "few powerful actors dominate and possibly block participation by diverse actors" and the DFR with its institutional funding "adds to the prevalence of institutional advocacy".

INTERSECTIONALITY?

Against these different trajectories of women's umbrella organizations in Belgium and Germany, we explore how far intersectionality is picked up as an approach to inclusivity and a method of organising in the two countries. As a start, we found that explicit mentions of intersectionality as a term was close to non-existent on the organizations' extensive websites[v]. Yet, when looking at descriptive and substantive representation, the judgment is not very clear.

The CFFB and VR – struggling to truly engage with intersectionality

In terms of descriptive representation, both umbrella organizations cover the traditional ideological and philosophical divides characterizing Belgian society, and go beyond it. They include Jewish women's organizations, those focusing on migrants and ethnic minorities (to be read as having a Muslim background), and the African Great Lakes Region (mainly Congo). Contrary to the CFFB the VR also counts a LGBTQI umbrella organization among its members. However, this apparent diversity loses scope when considering which civil society organizations and other actors operating in the broad feminist field are not a member of the CFFB or VR. For instance, Ella, a major expertise centre on gender and ethnicity, focusing initially on Muslim women but broadening its scope over time and explicitly adopting an intersectional approach, has chosen not to be a member of the VR. The same goes for other organizations focusing on women with a Muslim background, for both the CFFB and the VR, and for LGBTQI organizations, especially when it comes to the CFFB. While the umbrella organizations cover the diversity of the traditional Belgian ideological and philosophical landscape, they do less so when it comes to the diversity and intersections characterizing Belgian society today.

The CFFB counts a more diverse range of profiles among its board and staff members than the VR. While the latter looks very Flemish, the CFFB counts more people from different national backgrounds characterizing the Belgian population. This might be explained by the fact that the VR tends to focus on the Flemish level, while the CFFB is traditionally strongly embedded in Brussels and represents its diversity. This said, there are limits to this diversity and numerous intersections are missing. The CFFB actually still carries part of the old heritage of the National Women's Council in it: many of its leading figures are liberal or socialist, but especially strictly secular. While the geographic roots may vary, including all that comes with it in terms of religious or philosophical backgrounds, the group is still very homogenous and not much different from the profiles of board and staff members of the VR.

While both umbrella organizations show openings to diversity in their descriptive representation, intersectionality is by no means mainstreamed at that level. This limited descriptive representation is not an issue of conscious tokenism on behalf of the umbrella organizations. It rather is a mixture of their incapacity to truly broaden their scope and a number of organizations therefore not wanting to join, as will be explained below.

The same can be found when looking at the substantive dimension of representation, to an extent that it explains part of the intersections lacking in the descriptive dimension. Lafon (2017b) points for instance at the strictly secular character of the CFFB, rooted in a strong adherence to the French tradition of universalism, and the way in which this principle made it vehemently oppose the headscarf. This led to a major conflict within the CFFB, in the wake of which a number of member organizations left the CFFB. Amongst them were also women's and feminist organizations not (primarily) representing Muslim women, such as the Belgian network for gender studies, because they no longer recognized themselves in an umbrella organization standing only for a segment of the Belgian women – actually reflecting and reproducing white privilege – and not representing their diversity. The debate on the headscarf led to similar, though less vehement, discussions within the VR. Similarly, both the CFFB and the VR take a strict abolitionist position when it comes to prostitution, relating it to human trafficking, defining it as by definition a form of violence, and seeing it as a ultimate expression of a patriarchal system. Again, this makes a number of women's or feminist organizations, working on prostitution or not, feel not in accordance with the position taken by the umbrella organization, and they prefer not to be part of it. Another example are LGBTQI actors. Only one such organization is a member of the VR, the CFFB counts none of them in its ranks, only some lesbian women, but without representing an organization. Many LGBTQI actors consider the umbrella organizations to be too institutionalized and not radical enough in their theoretical and political approach (Lafon

2017b). They ignore or neglect many issues of concern to LGBTQI people, again a reason not to be a member.

Indeed, if we look at the main topics dealt with by both women's councils, we find a predominant focus on schooling and education; women's participation in the labour market, the pay gap and the career gap; maternity rights, parental leave, father's leave, child care and care work; the gender bias in social security and fiscal rights discriminating couples; the precarious position of mainly women after divorce, an insufficient protection of alimony rights, and the female face of poverty in general; the prevalence of, insufficient legal and other protection against and help in case of sexism, rape and gender-based violence in general; the gendered nature of human rights, war, and the recognition of the importance of women in peace processes, women migrants, refugees and their limited asylum rights. While the range of topics addressed is broad, issues of importance to migrant women, especially from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, LGBTQI people, but also problems related to ageism and disability, are close to if not completely absent. The closest one of the two women's councils comes to it is the CFFB when addressing interculturality. It thereby refers to cultural differences and minorities, but exclusively frames the issue in terms of precarious positions at the level of education, the labour market, housing and other related areas. While relevant, this focus reduces the topic of interculturality to one of social position and class, without addressing interculturality as such. It thereby is not only a good showcase of epistemic privilege, but also explains why many groups do not feel represented by the CFFB.

What Lafon (2018) calls the 'Belgian consensual spirit', indeed seems to characterize the two women's councils. While having broadened their scope, they did not adopt all intersections characterizing Belgian society, let alone mainstream them in the descriptive and substantive dimension of their representative work. They do not speak for all women, and therefore loose some women's and feminist organizations. While it might be difficult for umbrella

organizations to come up with sharp positions and still defend all intersections, they do not seem to problematize the fact that they do not take into account particular intersections.

The DFR – opened up to intersectional approaches

The DFR 60 member organizations come from a multitude of backgrounds: church/faith-based organizations (protestant, catholic, jewish, muslim), women's caucuses of all major political parties (plus the feminist party), professional women's associations (doctors, academics, midwifes, craftswomen, housekeeping, business and management, social work, engineers, science and technology, arts, equal opportunity officers of public administration, civil servants, etc), migrant women organizations, trade unions, feminist and lesbian groups (webgrrrls, Weibernetz, Lesbenring etc), disabilities associations, women's shelter associations, family and mother associations (single parents, binational parents, working mothers), social, cultural, and sports associations. Only a small minority formed the original members, and the broadening over time demonstrates the ability of the DFR to include intersectional groups in the mainstream movement.

While the member organizations cover a broad range, this does not translate equally well into who represents the DFR in public. The board consists of five white, older, middle class women from a sports association, a protestant and catholic organization background, the Christian Democratic Party (CDU) and a business association; quite similar to the founding members. The DFR office team of twelve women seems more diverse as it includes women of colour and/or with non-German names.

By definition of membership rules and highlighted by its descriptive representation, the DFR sticks to its roots and clearly puts gender first: associations not dominated by women are prohibited as members, but every organization putting gender first can apply to join the DFR

umbrella. Despite its broad membership, we found no indication in DFR documents that making the board more diverse is an issue; who represents “all women” is not problematized.

With view to substantive representation and intersectionality we find more variations in the DFR repertoires. In 2015, the DFR initiated the CEDAW shadow report, which then was compiled by 38 organizations consisting of DFR members and other volunteering organizations recruited with an open call. Reporting has become quite an institutionalized process in which the DFR holds a privileged position and receives government funding for organizing it. Nevertheless, the whole CEDAW process shows DFR’s ability to use intersectionality as coalition strategy and to include representatives of different intersectional groups beyond their members and on equal level. Moreover, the final text allowed for expressing specific issues in the context of a mainstream agenda.[vi] The DFR accentuated the horizontal – read: intersectional – application of issues like employment, age, poverty, health, disabilities, LGBTQI, migration and refugees, East and West German differences, racism and social class; all working groups had to reflect on all issues and also their intersections.

When we look more into how the DFR deals with intersectionality in policy fields, we see that challenging their (epistemic) privilege (Evans and Lépinard in this volume) occurs unevenly and selectively. Migration and asylum dominated the policy debate in Germany since 2015, and the DFR also put it as a priority topic from 2016 to 2018. In 2018, the DFR, women migrant groups and refugee support groups co-organized the conference “Integration gemeinsam gestalten” (Shaping integration together) on supporting the societal integration of migrants and refugees. The DFR position paper resulting from engaging with this topic highlighted the voice and input from women migrants and refugee organizations, but it was solely transmitted by the DFR and not all participants to decision-makers. Scrutinizing the content of the position paper further shows that topics like social background, single parents and women minors, marriage and divorce, and gender-based violence were addressed, while

other aspects like disabilities or LGBTQI rights did not appear or only in other documents related to the topic.

The selective treatment of different intersectional aspects can also be found for family policy that changed considerably over the last decade in Germany (Henninger and von Wahl 2018). Here, marriage equality has been another hot topic until it was legislated in 2017. DFR documents are somewhat contradictory: whether LGBTQI issues appear or not varies to great extent between different subject working groups. For instance, the DFR promotes officially trans rights and recently announced an internal debate how to change in the light of overcoming gender binary concepts. Also, homosexual couples are simply mentioned alongside with heterosexual ones when demanding changes in health policy related to giving birth. Yet, the growing harassment and violence towards trans people is not mentioned in gender-based violence, despite a major DFR 2016 campaign "No means No" that resulted in Germany signing the Istanbul-Convention and a considerable tightening of criminal law. Thus, LGBTQI rights are not consistently attended to in the DFR work.

The DFR sometimes reflects on its limitations in treating intersectionality. In 2017, the W20 summit[vii] brought together a broad range of international and national organizations and finished with the presentation of the W20 communiqué to German chancellor Angela Merkel. While the DFR highlighted the importance that W20 addresses gender equality, it also noticed and welcomed the criticism raised on W20 as '1%-feminism' or 'business feminism'. Overall, economic, social and employment policy have become one of the most important areas of DFR engagement; quite a change compared to the DFR position after WWII (Marx Ferree 2012). Nevertheless, it is here were intersectional aspects are treated only marginally. The specific challenges of women migrants, older women, disabled women are not visibly addressed to a considerable extent. The focus is clearly on (working) class and motherhood,

both in Germany connected with discussions on minimum wage, return from parental leave to part-time to full-time, and equal pay.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we examined the Belgian and German women's umbrella organizations regarding their claims to represent all women and used their official positions and publications to exemplarily investigate if intersectionality becomes visible in their organizational structure and output. We were interested in whether and how old and institutionalized women's movement organizations change from within, regarding membership, topics, and how these relate to intersectionality. What can we learn from our cases?

These three first wave movement organizations were quite successful in surviving. Today all three are institutionally privileged in accessing policy-making due to the firm institutionalization in their national contexts over the course of time. Institutionalization occurred despite (or alongside) critical junctures. WWII put their work on hold and led to post-war re-organization. Moreover, the Belgian Women's Council had to adjust to federalisation and the German DFR to a new landscape after the reunification of the 1990s. However, external pressure cannot fully explain engaging with (or rather not) intersectional aspects and explanations tend to differ for the three umbrella organizations. As for the DFR, the growing variety of members seemingly unfolds bottom-up pressure and results in slowly but steadily growing attention for intersectional aspects in political issues. The impact of increasingly diverse member organizations is not so clearly detectable for CFFB or VR and would need more investigation in the future. For all three umbrella organizations, top-down pressure is an important factor in extending the political agenda (without necessarily

engaging with intersectional aspects). That the EWL secretary general originated already from CFFB and from DFR reflects close ties. For CFFB and VR this also coincides with geographical closeness. Despite these connections, the national context strongly shapes which topics are picked up and whether intersectionality plays a role.

Indeed, the political opportunity structure is an important factor influencing women's umbrella organizations' intersectional engagement. In Belgium, the consensus-building policy tradition, both within the organization itself and overall, as well as their institutionalization within the political system, limits (new) radical positions. The only exceptions are principles going back to their roots, such as patriarchy (in the case of prostitution) or secularism (in the CFFB position on the headscarf), but these contribute to blocking off intersectionality. The situation is different for the DFR, which can – with reference to its members – take a more pronounced or even conflictual position towards politics. The DFR can use its privileged position in German policy networks for promoting more progressive (although certainly not radical) positions.

From a more methodological point of view, a longitudinal thick description seems to be a fruitful approach to grasp current praxis of old movement organizations and the limited intersectional praxis they showcase. Still, a major challenge remains for all three umbrella organizations: how to reconcile potentially contradictory intersectional positions? By becoming more diverse and broadening their scope, they also run the risk of intersectional interests conflicting. How to solve this balancing act, what to prioritize, and which theoretical principles could guide the umbrella organizations in this exercise? All of this brings us back to the question how bound feminist principles are not only by place and time but also by intersections.

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[i] Cf. http://www.cffb.be/ and http://www.vrouwenraad.be/, accessed 27 June 2019.
[ii] Cf. https://www.frauenrat.de/, accessed 27 June 2019.
[iii] The OMC is a soft law mechanism typically using guidelines, indicators, and best-practice-sharing.
[iv] This chapter focuses on the developments of the DFR in former West Germany, the Federal Republic of Germany. For an overview of the history of former East Germany, the German Demcoratic Republic, and changes after reunification please refer to Marx Ferree (2012).
[v] Two hits for the DFR, none for the CFFB and VR.
[vi] This information relies on data from the DFR as well as information by Petra Ahrens, who participated in the reporting process on behalf of a women's organization.
[vii] Cf. https://w20argentina.com/en/, accessed 25 May 2019.