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Introduction

This article builds on the rich, diverse feminist traditions for theorizing of intersectionality, including tensions between these traditions, to examine key gender concerns, namely violence against women, and state policy thereon. Translating such theoretical complexity into policy and practice is a major challenge. Here specifically we interrogate the relations of gender and intersectionality, conceptualized as gendered intersectionalities, by examining and comparing how multiple inequalities are made visible and invisible in state policy and debates in the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. Attention is paid to different forms of gendered intersectionalities in policy, for example, tendencies to degendering of violence against women. Such analysis can be a means for assessing if, how and to what extent inclusion of multiple inequalities could increase the quality of policy, for both reducing and stopping violence, and assisting those subjected to violence.

Violence, inequalities and intersectionalities

Intersectionality and violence against women

The term, 'violence against women', denotes violence that is directed towards women because they are women (Watts and Zimmermann, 2002); it is a clearly gendered category; it is not degendered. This framing recognizes the structural element of violence; violence is shaped by

and structures social positions and gender orders, and serves to maintain inequality. Violence against women is not explained primarily by psychological or pathological characteristics of individual perpetrators or dysfunctional families, but is reconceptualized as a form of power, inequality and control.

What might be called the violence against women movement, involving a mixture of activism, political work, policy development, and research, has addressed gendered intersectionalities regarding race, class, nationality, sexuality, age, disability for many years, stressing intersections of gender with class, ethnicity and racialization (Abraham, 2000; Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005). As Dominguez and Menjivar (2014) show, low income minority ethnic and racialized women can be most disadvantaged and subjected to violent structures, making them more vulnerable to interpersonal violence. Relative disadvantage on one social dimension is likely to increase vulnerability to interpersonal violence, for example, through lack of resources affected by class and racialized subordination. Increasingly, intersections of gender with other inequalities, such as age, disability, indigeneity, rurality, are considered.

Intersectionality, violence against women, inequalities, and the quality of policy

Our focus in this paper is on violence seen as inequality (Hearn, 2013). Violence is itself a form of social inequality, an unequal(izing) social structural division and relation *of its own*, a social distribution of *who does what to whom*. Violent practices link with social divisions and inequalities, class positions and other social intersections, as enactments of superordinate power, resistance to subordination and/or enactments of relative power in positions of subordination. Violence can be the reproduction of raw unchallenged power and/or reassertion of power in the face of resistance and possible loss of relative power. Accordingly, practices in the state,

religion, media, and other institutions, nationally and transnationally, are powerful in setting agendas of systems of differentiations and recognitions of violence. Gender domination persists in violent institutions and state control of violence, in constructions, identification, naming and defining violence. The very construction of what counts as violence is related to historical relations of gender power, social divisions, ideology and hegemony.

To enhance the quality of anti-violence policy it matters what inequalities are considered, and how these inequalities and their relations are conceptualized and linked to violence. Carol Bacchi (1999: 2) asserts that policies constitute "competing interpretations or representations of political issues", and proposes a 'what's the problem?' approach to policy analysis – "what presuppositions are implied or taken for granted in the problem representation which is offered; and what effects are connected to this representation of the 'problem?'".

In this view, much policy and policy development can be understood as policy on gender and gender relations (Hearn and McKie, 2008). A common example here is that violence against women is often constructed as and only as domestic violence. This suggests an apparent demarcation of the private and the public, obscuring dynamic, fluid interactions between those realms. It limits the potential to tackle the interweaving of public and private, and related gender hierarchies. Interpersonal violence against women crosses 'social spaces' in several ways: first, there is the risk of violence after separation; second, in some countries most men arrested for domestic violence do not live with the woman they abuse; third, governments vary greatly how domestic violence laws and governmental and other organizational policy intervene in patriarchal autonomy over personal affairs, and shape gender relations; fourth, 'public'/'private' distinctions can mask the capacity of men to draw on their greater share of public sphere resources to control women in their personal lives.

Taking intersectionality seriously in anti-violence policy requires making all forms of violence and intersections between inequalities more visible, albeit within a framework that keeps gender in focus, as well as how violence is caused by and results in intersectional inequalities (Strid et al., 2013). It means avoiding further stigmatizing of already marginalized groups, as when policies present certain forms of violence (for example, female genital mutilation [FGM], dowry deaths, forced marriage; see Roggeband and Verloo, 2007; Rolandsen Augustin, 2011) as 'culturalized', i.e. caused by cultural differences. The complex links between violence, power, and inequalities are rarely expressed explicitly in policy (Krizsán et al., 2007). So how can the concept of intersectionality become more useful in practice? This is far from easy; indeed several scholars question the possibility of joining all power relations in one and the same analysis, and argue for the need of acknowledging that each social division has its own ontological base (Yuval-Davis, 2006; Verloo, 2006; Walby et al., 2012b; Walby, 2009). However, exclusion of multiple inequalities from policy (and policy analysis) risks producing lower quality policy. The quality of policy on violence against women rests on criteria such as: internal consistency between the diagnosis and prognosis of a policy problem (Verloo, 2007; Lombardo and Meier, 2009); explicit gendering (Dombos et al., 2009; Fernández de Vega et al., 2010); comprehensiveness of policy (Walby, 2009); and non-marginalizing intersectional inclusion: the inclusion of multiple inequalities through naming and visibility, and enhancing how this is done (Walby, 2007; Dombos et al., 2009; van der Haar and Verloo, 2013).

Comparative European material

Violence, and 'the problem of violence', is framed differently in different European countries. But first we comment briefly on the European context. There is no unified, coherent policy on

violence against women in Europe or in the EU. Though contested, the EU lacks legal competence in the domain of violence, and the Council of Europe builds on agreements between its members and promotes human rights through conventions, most importantly the Istanbul convention. There is no legally binding overall common approach to violence against women within the EU. The EU defines gender-based violence, including gender-based violence against women, as both a form of discrimination and a violation of the victim's fundamental freedoms (EC, 2014). The 'gender-based' element means that it is defined as violence directed against a person because of their gender or gender identity/expression or as violence that affects persons of a particular gender disproportionately. Violence against women and girls is the most common form of gender-based violence. It is estimated that in Europe, 20% to 25% of women have suffered physical violence at least once during their lives (CoE, 2006). In the EU context, violence against women has shifted from being framed as a health issue (Fernández de Vega et al., 2010) to more recently being framed as an equality issue; violence against women is also framed as a consequence of the inequalities between women and men as well as an obstacle to equality (EC, 2014).

At the nation-state level within Europe there is large variation in both gender equality policies and how intensely the issue of violence against women has been addressed. The empirical material we draw on here is based on the analysis of policy documents on violence against women, including laws, policy plans, parliamentary debates and civil society texts from the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. These three European countries are interesting to compare as they show significant differences in terms of gender history and politics, relations of feminism and the state, and patterns of migration and colonialization (see Table 1). Such various conditions demand great care in interpretation of comparative studies on violence, policy and

violence policy. The policy data derives from the EU QUING project (see Acknowledgements) and primarily covers the period 1995-2011; thus this paper is partly historical, as even since 2011 there have been significant developments, especially with the financial crisis and cutbacks in state support for anti-violence services, along with other policy changes.[1]

[insert Table 1]

Policy contexts and policy development

We now, first, describe the broad policy contexts and policy developments in violence against women policy in the three countries, before turning to the range of inequalities and forms of gender intersectionalities, and then the specific question of degendering in these policies.

The UK has a long history of feminist activity against violence against women.[2] This includes feminist pressures on the state, sometimes feminist involvement in local and central policy development, with the women's refuge/shelter movement, with strong separatist traditions, increasingly operating in complex relations with state institutions. The first refuge for women and children who had experienced domestic violence was set up by the NGO Chiswick Women's Aid in 1971. The Women's Aid Federation of England was set up in 1974, and the following year the Home Affairs Select Committee on Violence in Marriage was initiated, leading to the 1976 Domestic Violence and Matrimonial Proceedings Act (England & Wales).

In the UK policy documents analyzed, violence against women is described and conceptualized as violence against women, violations of women's human rights, and as a form of oppression of women that supports gender inequality. In the most recent policy plan, it is framed as a crime (Home Office, 2014). There are variations in the extent to which women and gender

are named; or whether the debate is degendered: the more recent, the less degendered. Violence against women in the British policy context predominantly focuses on: domestic violence and violence in partnerships, sexual assault/violence and rape, harassment and stalking, forced marriage, FGM, honour crimes, and to lesser extent trafficking. Prostitution is not framed as a form of violence.

There is no single British comprehensive legislation such as the Swedish Women's Peace Legislation or the United States federal law Violence against Women Act 1994 (renewed 2013). Instead, legislation and policy addresses specific forms of violence against women (for example, forced marriage), which provide sanctions and remedies for various forms of violence against women. 'Domestic violence' is not a specific offence under criminal law; rather many forms of domestic violence are codified as crimes (for example, assault, false imprisonment, rape). Domestic violence is the most commonly addressed and visible form of violence against women, often related to and framed as a problem of crime and crime prevention, and sometimes related to health or economic cost.

Recent policy initiatives include the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Bill (2015) and, in England and Wales, criminalization of forced marriage (2014), strengthening of protection against stalking (2012), and tightened criminalization of FGM, such as it becoming illegal for British nationals to perform FGM outside UK borders from 2003. Since 9/11, there has been stronger policy orientation towards problem formulations such as 'violence in the communities', which in the UK policy context means religion or ethnicity. Additionally, recent years have seen a mobilization by some men advocating the gender-neutralization of violence (against women), arguing that the use of violence is 'gender balanced'.

The Netherlands developed specific policies to combat violence against women in 1984 after the government had invited feminist activists and policy makers to together set goals and principles for state policy (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). The plan adopted a feminist analysis and framed violence against women as problem of unequal power relations between men and women, which structurally maintained inequality between men and women. The literal translation of violence policy from the early years is 'sexual violence against women' and included ill treatment of women; sexual abuse of children; sexual violence at work; sexual violence by care providers; pornography; prostitution; sex tourism; trafficking in women, violence against women refugees and ethnic-minority women. Whereas these early policy plans had a specific gender focus, later policies gradually 'degendered' the problem, by turning attention to boys and men as (potential) victims and de-emphasizing the gendered distribution of both victimization and abusing (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). While there are comprehensive policy plans on various forms of violence, there is no integral legislation covering all forms of violence against women. Dutch policy-making on violence is fragmented, predominantly 'soft', and degendered. 'Degendered' here means the practice of using ostensibly non-gendered terms to denote categories known to be gendered.

Though Swedish national laws against violence against women date back to the 13th Century, with Birger Jarl's law on protection of women and women's peace, recent legislative initiatives in Sweden on violence against women can be dated from 1965 when marital rape was criminalized.

Violence against women is referred to as men's violence against women. Sweden is among the European countries with the most proactive policies on violence against women. It is the only European country in which legislation on men's violence against women is explicitly named as

such (Kvist, 2010). The Swedish Government and Parliament have, since 1991, defined violence against women as an expression of unequal power relations between men and women. There is a collective body of legislation gathered under the Women's Peace Legislation (1997), and violence against women has been a political concern since the 1970s. The offence of 'gross violation of integrity' introduced in 1999 to address the complexity of harm experienced by women, and criminalization of buying of sex.

Honour-related violence, or what in the Swedish context is named 'violence and oppression in the name of honour' is included in the policy field of men's violence against women, and covers girls, young women, boys, young men, and young LGBT persons. The predominant framing, or construction, of violence in the Swedish policy context is violence as a problem of gender equality and human rights. The Action Plan For Combating Men's Violence Against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honour and Violence in Same-Sex Relationships (2007) saw a shift in terms of: the integration, yet separate naming, of crimes based on honour and same-sex, hate crime, and the framing of violence against women from a problem of equality to a problem of serious crime. An even earlier framing was that of health. Violence against women is also characterized as a major social problem affecting the whole of society. The crime framing is more prevalent within policy addressing rape and sexual violence than in other forms of violence against women. Swedish policy names and makes visible violence in close relationships, sexual violence and rape, FGM, honour crimes, prostitution, sexualization of public space (pornography), trafficking and more recently forced and arranged marriages. However, visibility of various forms of violence is not necessarily followed by a visibility of minoritized or marginalized groups of women. There is, for example, a strong heteronormative bias in Swedish policy on violence.

Range of intersectional inequalities

Having outlined the relevant national policies, we may ask: what is the range of (intersecting) inequalities and social groups made visible and included, or excluded, in policy on violence against women? How are these constructed, and in relation to what problems?

In the analyzed British policy, the most commonly named inequalities are ethnicity and age. Other named intersections include religion and national/migrant status. Overall, class, sexual orientation, marital/family status and disability are named less frequently. There are few intersections with gender; those named include intersections of ethnicity or race. Minority groups are named, for example, as minority ethnic or 'racial' groups (which include Roma); religion as a reference to minority or non-dominant religious groups, or to the moral preferences of the majority religion. Class is not explicitly named as an inequality, but there is reference to class inequality by the naming of 'lower-skilled', 'unemployed', 'economically disadvantaged groups', 'social exclusion/inclusion' and 'lone mothers'. Class remains important, even if not mentioned explicitly. There is direct naming of sexual orientation and references to gay, lesbian or bisexual people. There is reference to the specific forms of violence that can affect older people, the youth, disabled people, and lone mothers. The only inequalities intersecting with gender to a more than marginal extent are: ethnicity and age in policy on domestic violence and sexual violence; ethnicity in the civil society text on domestic violence; and age and disability in the law on sexual assault. Inequalities intersecting with inequalities *other* than gender are ethnicity and religion in policy on forced marriage.

From the early 2000s, there has been an increasing political interest in the potential for community building, often based on faith communities and partnerships between government

and voluntary bodies, and the roles of religious groups at local level in community development and their social capital forming potential have been emphasized (for example, Farnell et al., 2003). Government interest was made visible both in the publication of the major report *Working Together: Co-operation between Government and Faith Communities in 2004* (Home Office Faith Communities Unit, 2004) and in the commissioning of the *Review of the Evidence Base on Faith Communities* (Beckford et al., 2006).

In the Netherlands, several groups are identified at the point of intersection within the policy field of violence against women, but one group especially stands out, namely, ethnic minority women (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). The most frequently intersecting inequalities in policy on violence against women are gender and ethnicity and gender and age (where age is often an add-on as in 'women and girls', and shows up also as embedded within gender and ethnicity: 'ethnic minority women and girls'). Gender intersects less frequently with citizenship status and family status. Intersections of gender with religion and sexual orientation are less frequent; intersections with class and disability are invisible. Next to gender, the most important inequalities are ethnicity, age, and citizenship status. Class, disability, sexual orientation and religion are absent. Lauwers and van der Wal (2010: 58) note: "We may conclude that ethnicized-gendered actors form an actor category in diagnosis more or less isolated from other actor groups in society. The 'majority' group or 'privileged' group is never seen as part of the problem. Ethnicized-gendered actors are a separate group that causes or is suffering from separate/own problems". This means that groups at the intersection of gender and ethnicity are very visible – one could say that they are hyper-visible – but that this cannot be seen as contributing to the quality of the policies involved. While there is indeed attention to the problems of these groups, at the same time, they are singled out as belonging to a culture that is

problematic as such, in a context that is already stigmatizing this culture, and 'othering' them (see Roggeband and Verloo, 2007). Additionally, the Dutch, as well as the UK, policies on violence against women are often embedded in an overall 'crime and justice' frame (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010, 26), indicating a focus rather on sanctioning than on support for victims. Moreover, attention to violence against women is linked to the specific labelling of certain types of violence as culturally specific (as in honour crimes, FGM and forced marriage). In conclusion, the form of hyper-visibility that is found in Dutch anti-violence policies related to gender shows the risks involved in singling out certain intersectional groups.

In the Swedish case, the policy documents analyzed address gender, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, and sexuality with reference to 'violence in same-sex relationships'. The Criminal Code requires more severe punishment of crimes motivated by hatred of a person due to that person's race, skin colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion/faith, sexual orientation or "other similar circumstance" (Criminal Code, 29 §2). There is an apparent lack of class as an inequality axis in the Swedish policy context. This may be linked to the comparatively small income differences up to the recent years, as indicated by low Gini Index values (see, for example, UNDP, 2014). Specifically, it speaks to how the politics of class (in)equality is embedded, and in a sense taken-for-granted, in Swedish politics, welfare and the creation of the *folkhem* [people's home].[3]

In conclusion to this overview of the three countries, we note that 'race and ethnicity' are different labels for what are often similar social relations in the UK and the Netherlands. In the Netherlands Islam-related ethnicities are the most strongly racialized, while 'race' has been used more in relation to Blackness/African descent, and is not visible in policy against violence. Especially in the UK and the Netherlands, age seems mostly embedded within other groups, and is then often an 'add-on' (as in "women and girls"). In all countries there are some very

significant absences of inequalities that are not in focus in relation to violence, such as lesbians or people with disabilities (with the exception of Sweden for the latter). Most striking is the low (UK) or almost absent presence (Netherlands, Sweden) of class as an explicitly named inequality related to violence.

The construction of gendered intersectionalities

Turning more directly to gendered intersectionalities, additional questions arise: what is the importance of intersectionality in policy on violence against women? How is intersectionality constructed within this policy? How is it named? What range of terms and concepts are used to denote intersectionality or intersecting axes? How is intersectionality framed and practiced?

In UK policy the terms used to denote minoritized and marginalized women in policy include: disadvantaged women (Home Office, 2003); vulnerable women (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2007), women in the communities (Home Office, 2005b); homeless women (Home Office 2003); economically disadvantaged women (Home Office, 2005a); lone mothers; lower skilled women, multiple disadvantaged, and vulnerable adults (see Strid et al., 2010). These are all actor categories. Intersectionality is articulated as multiple discrimination or multiple disadvantaged in the UK national policy context (Strid et al., 2009). It is a mutually shaping understanding of intersectionality that is visible; in other words, inequalities shape each other (Walby et al., 2012a).

During the examined period, and with the exception of the intersection of gender and ethnicity, intersectionality is generally not treated as central to policy on violence against women. This exception is particularly notable in the policy fields of forced marriage and FGM, both framed as a problem of 'the Other'. To some extent, this exception is also present in policy

on domestic violence. In many cases, intersectionality is central to policy problem definitions, but it is not part of the policy solutions; intersectionality is important to the diagnosis of a problem, but not to the prognosis. Multiple disadvantages and discrimination are targeted in the introductions, forewords or executive summaries of policy documents, and in relation to violence described as a structural problem located within the civil society, and yet as a problem of crime and justice for the polity. However, the proposed policy actions rarely target the consequences of intersecting multiple inequalities. On the rare occasions when they do, the prognosis and policy actions are not aiming to transform the discriminatory structures; rather, policy actions constitute special measures, programmes targeting, for example, lone parents' housing or women in ethnic minority communities.

In the Netherlands, intersectionality is indicated predominantly through the mentioning of intersectional actor categories (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). Given that the intersection with gender and ethnicity is the one that is most strongly present in the Netherlands, what are then the terms in which policy documents discuss and articulate it? The answer for this is given mostly based on policy plans, not laws, as the current legal texts on violence do not explicitly articulate intersectionality (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). Domestic violence policies are degendered very strongly and mention mainly 'perpetrators' and 'victims'. If there are sections of the policy that are gendered then they tend to focus on ethnicity. The label used for this is 'allochthonous' women (Yanow and van der Haar, 2013). The word allochthonous defines people as not 'from here' (as opposed to autochthonous, who are 'from here') and might be adequate for migrant persons, but is actually only used for anyone who has grandparents from a non-western country; thus it is quite negatively connoted. Given this, the use of any such label easily contributes to

further marginalization or stigmatization of an already marginalized or stigmatized group (Roggeband and Verloo, 2007).

Swedish policy uses the notion of 'particularly vulnerable groups' to denote intersectionality (from 2007 onwards, and in the Swedish Action Plan on Violence Against Women). The groups, actor categories, constructed as particularly vulnerable and framed as more important to target than other groups include women with mental and physical disabilities (gender/disability), older women (gender/age), younger women (gender/age), immigrant women (nationality/ethnicity/gender) and women with addiction or substance problem (gender/health). Swedish policy underlines the unity of the group 'women victims of violence', and problematizes how "many who have personal experience of violence state that people focus more on their disabilities, their foreign background, their substance abuse/addiction or their age than on the fact that they have been assaulted. National minorities experience similar problems. The Government has viewed this situation with concern and wishes to make clear that all women exposed to violence must be given the requisite support and protection based on their needs, whoever they may be and whatever background they may have" (Government Offices of Sweden, 2007).

Degendering: an intersectional paradox?

An important aspect of moves to intersectional policy is that they may also sometimes and paradoxically bring with them tendencies towards degendering. In the case of the UK where, superficially, there may have appeared to be a lack of recognition of gender intersecting with other inequalities, caution is needed because of the process of degendering. Previously gendered categories became degendered in policy on violence against women under the last Labour

governments (1997-2010). Examples of this include 'victim of domestic violence' and 'perpetrator of sexual assault'. When policy is degendered, there are no immediately visible intersections of gender and other inequalities. However, degendering is not the same as gender-neutrality. When not considering the full range of concepts used to denote multiple inequalities, there are no visible intersections between gender and other inequalities. Yet, when understanding that degendering is not necessarily an expression of gender-neutrality, but rather a strategic way of making policy inclusive, the policy debates are heavily infused with gendered intersectionalities. More recent policy is yet again explicitly gendered (Home Office, 2014).

In the Netherlands anti-violence policy on sexual harassment and domestic violence is often degendered, while policies against what is labelled 'honour-related violence' and FGM is not (Lauwers and van der Wal, 2010). In the last case gender is named in combination with ethnicity. Looking at the absences, class is a very clear absence in Dutch policies on violence. Lauwers and van der Wal (2010: 47) see the absence of class in the issue of gender-based violence as related to the degendering (especially for domestic violence and sexual harassment) and to the unlinking of the gender-based violence documents from the notion of structural gender inequality in the Dutch multi-year emancipation plans (2008-2011) where class *is* mentioned in the chapter on violence against women. This plan states that the social-economic dependence of women on men is a cause of the unequal power between the genders and that violence against women in turn is a consequence of this power difference. So in this generic gender equality plan the issue is *gendered and* linked to structural (power) inequalities between men and women in society, while in documents that are specifically dedicated to violence issues, this is not the case. In comparing how policy is degendered, the UK and the Netherlands appear to share a similar pattern of cultural bias: 'culturalized' forms of violence are gendered, whereas non-culturalized forms of

violence are degendered. This raises further questions on how such bias relates to migration patterns and (post)colonialization.

Swedish policy on violence against women was not degendered in the same way as British policy has been during the researched time period, nor does it show the 'hyper-visibility' of the intersection of gender and ethnicity as the Dutch policy. Policy in Sweden is 'hyper-gendered': 'women' is the most common group referred to as victims of violence. Girls and young women are often mentioned in relation to honour-related crimes, but also boys, bisexuals, homosexuals, transgendered persons and men. Honour-related crimes are described as different from other forms of violence due to their 'collective nature' with multiple perpetrators and victims. Perpetrators are predominantly named as men, with the exception for policy on same-sex violence, in which case perpetrators are non-gendered (Kvist, 2010). Women are, therefore, not named as perpetrators. Sexual violence could potentially be seen as marking an exception; the policy field has recently shown tendencies towards degendering. In general, and instead, there is a rather strong emphasis on women and on men, leading to other forms of exclusions, for example, violence in LGBT relationships. The categories 'women' and 'men' are referred to as two internally unified groups with mutually exclusive interests and living conditions. The lack of degendering of Swedish policy may follow from underlying understandings of a pervasive sex/gender power system. Instead of degendering, we see marginalization of minoritized and othered groups in Swedish gender equality policy generally and policy on violence against women. The sex/gender power framing and strong focus on a unified, cohesive voice of 'women' may risk excluding voices of women who for various reasons do not fit the dominant norm.

Conclusion

This paper has investigated various forms of gendered intersectionalities in policy, and how analysis can be developed for assessing if, how and to what extent the inclusion of multiple inequalities could increase the quality of policy, for reducing and stopping violence, and assisting those subject to violence. This issue is becoming increasingly recognized in academic and policy debates on gender and the state. The development of good quality policy, addressing several inequalities, may be sought; yet, at the same time, depending how this is done, attending to different inequalities may interfere with each other. Which inequalities matter and how they are interrelated has to be seen as a matter for investigation and analysis in each policy context. In the time period examined, while the focus in the UK is on questions of visibility/silencing, the main issue, indeed problem, in the Netherlands is not so much the danger of invisibility of multiple inequalities, but rather a hyper-visibility of gender/ethnicity intersections in anti-violence policy. In contrast, the Swedish case is characterized by hyper-visibility of gender in policy.

Moreover, class, whilst being an important intersecting axis of inequality, is often implicit or even neglected in some of the policies analyzed here; for example, economic and income inequality is often strangely invisible. For the Swedish case, this may be partly explained by higher overall social equality, with relatively small income differences characterizing Nordic societies in international comparison (see Table 1), reflecting the historical and embedded taken-for-grantedness of class equality politics and corporatist class settlement. Race, ethnicity and religion do not override policy on class but rather are often more visible, acting more as a locus of policy, and indeed academic, attention.

Moves to certain kinds of intersectional emphases may also paradoxically bring with them tendencies towards degendering. So what are the implications of degendering? One conclusion is

that there needs to be recognition of the different meanings of degendering in different national contexts and between different forms of violence. The three countries differ in their respective approach to what we have called degendering. While policy in the UK from 1997 to 2010 was predominantly degendered, Sweden showed an almost hyper-gendering of policy which in turn silenced the recognition of minoritized women and class. The Netherlands shows a different pattern, with specific exceptions to degendering leading to selective gendering. Degendering in Dutch policy on domestic violence in combination with selective gendering makes the intersection of gender and ethnicity in other forms of violence hyper-visible. By studying anti-violence policy through a lens of intersectionality, country-specific problems and problematizations become visible. Another conclusion is that degendering can happen in general or in intersectionally specific ways. Degendering can mean that gender-specific needs of support for victims or gender-specific ways of addressing perpetrators may be silenced or even become an impossible question. Such an impossibility then is detrimental to the potential quality of policy.

When policy is degendered, and gender is downplayed or absent, a focus on intersectionality may paradoxically weaken the gender equality project, especially if it reduces the visibility of gender itself. This 'degendered intersectionality' or alternatively making one major single exception to such degendering (as in the case of ethnicity/gender in the Netherlands) can obscure the absences of other intersectional groups, such as, in the Netherlands, lesbian women and women living in poverty. In contrast to such degendered policy, the visibility of a more comprehensive range of interrelations and intersections of multiple, and indeed gendered, inequalities increases the quality of policy on violence against women. This facilitates the making and implementation of policy that concretely targets specific causes and effects of

different forms of violence against women. Without the inclusion of multiple inequalities in policy, violence for the groups at points of intersection is insufficiently and inadequately targeted. As of now, specific and different relative absences are noticeable in the three countries: class and sexuality in the Netherlands; sexuality and disability in Sweden; and class and ethnicity/religion for the UK. As we have seen, theoretical complexity is not always easily translatable into practical policy. The practical challenges of policy development include the uneven power dynamics that follow from emphasis on specific intersections in particular historical contexts. This may shift policies on violence against women from some forms of compartmentalization, but comprehensive policy addressing 'all intersections' for prevention and response to violence against women may remain utopian.

Notes

1. Towers and Walby (2012) and the False Economy Project have collected data on which public services are being affected by cuts to public spending. They estimate a reduction in the UK of 31 % of funding to services dealing with domestic violence and sexual abuse between 2010 and 2012. This has inevitably meant fewer refuge places and loss of expert help available to women suffering the effects of gender-related violence.

2. The UK situation is complicated by differences between England, Northern Ireland, Wales, and especially Scotland, with its own legal system (Hearn and McKie, 2010). The focus here was mainly on England, Northern Ireland and Wales.

3. Alestalo et al. (2009: 6) argue that "the 1930s represented a political watershed in all Nordic countries with national class compromises between industrial and agricultural/primary sector interests, and between labour and capital through the major trade union federations and employers' associations … reflected at the parliamentary and governmental level, with political compromises reached across parties representing various class or economic interests."

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Table 1. Information on the three focus countries

Country	Population (millions)	Income inequality*	Global gender gap rank **	Member of European Union	Year and the inequality first recognized in government machinery
Netherlands	16.8	30.9	14 (0.7730)	1958	Gender, (Directorate Coordination Emancipation Policy (1978)
Sweden	9.59	25	4 (0.8165)	1995	Gender (Delegation for Equality Between Women and Men 1972, Equal Opportunities Ombudsman 1980)
UK	64.1	35.97	26 (0.7383)	1973	Race (Race Relations Board 1965)

*Gini-index value according to UNDP Human Development Report 2014.

** World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2014.

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