AN INTRODUCTION TO

INTERSECTIONALITY

FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Table of Contents

Introduction

The year 2021 marked the 15th anniversary of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions' (CEMR) **Equality Charter,** [1] **a groundbreaking instrument designed to support local and regional governments (LRGs) in bringing greater equality to the lives of those they serve**, signed to date by over 2 000 signatories in 36 countries. To ensure the lasting impact of this achievement, CEMR seized the opportunity to launch a review and reflection process of the Charter.

During this review, intersectionality was singled out as a significant framework for understanding inequality and discrimination and, as such, it was considered important to ensure that there is a shared and better understanding of it among those working in LRGs.

Even as complex post-pandemic economic conditions exacerbate already pressing issues for LRGs such as migration and refugees from conflict zones, climate events and the energy crisis, social inequalities continue to permeate almost all the challenges they face.

Traditional issues that preoccupy LRGs such as education, health, transport, security and infrastructure remain constant albeit with growing demands for funding and resources as communities address the changing needs of their citizens, e.g. ageing populations and other demographic shifts.

Addressing inequalities through policymaking, both on a strategic and practical level, can benefit from an intersectional approach. The present primer therefore sets out to introduce this essential concept and its application by highlighting good practices from LRGs and providing some graphical tools to encourage dialogue and policy development.

The good practices presented below provide examples of different equality strands that intersect with gender. They were identified through desk research and singled out to represent diverse intersectionality approaches across Europe.

Intersectionality offers LRGs new ways of understanding and exploring how the different dimensions of an individual's identity can expose them to experiences of discrimination which are exacerbated where those dimensions intersect.

Engaging with intersectionality is not easy. This primer does not pretend to offer any quick fix solutions to the complex and interlinked societal challenges associated with equality and non-discrimination. It is CEMR's first attempt to open a dialogue and lay a foundation for LRGs to engage with the concept and think about how it can be integrated into their policies since **learning, applying and testing new approaches to delivering equality is an important step in itself in making inclusive communities a reality.**

1. Intersectionality as a Theory

This primer seeks to shine some light on this topic for LRGs by summarising the theory and illustrating it through examples of good practice and graphical tools. It provides a range of entry points for examining intersectionality as an approach, which can empower us to understand more about our communities and better identify and respond to their needs.

This section introduces the theory of intersectionality and its origin from academia to practice. The value in understanding the roots of intersectionality is twofold: first, it demonstrates how this theory was born out of life experience; and second, how such experiences can be a catalyst for analysing and interpreting discrimination in society.

For academics, theories provide the means to connect concepts and ideas with the real and observable world. The impact that intersectionality has had in grasping how inequalities and exclusion occur in multiple dimensions across groups and social identities continues to grow in importance for policymakers, activists and citizens.

The concept of intersectionality was first coined in 1989 by an American professor of law, Kimberlé Crenshaw, when she used the term to explore why legal challenges to discrimination in the labour market brought by black women were different from those involving black men or white women. She drew on three cases, including *DeGraffenreid v General Motors* (1976), in which a US court found that a cause of action could be examined for race discrimination or sex discrimination but not a combination of both.[2]

> **Intersectionality is a broad-based, collaborative intellectual and political project with many kinds of social actors.**
>
> *Patricia Hill Collins*

When Crenshaw published her seminal article, she brought new attention to the body of work on inequality in terms of the public and private spheres of an individual's life. This work included research and analysis that examined how practices, processes and actions in organisations and institutions can result in maintaining class, gender and racial inequalities.[3]

What Crenshaw unlocks with intersectionality poses a challenge to us all to figure out new and different tools to open up different conversations that move beyond singular narratives of discrimination. By engaging with intersectionality, she posits that voices and experiences of institutional power, identity and social (in)justice can be amplified.

The Cornerstones of Intersectionality: Gender, Race[i] and Class

Raising awareness about intersectionality among politicians and technical experts lays the foundation for exploring new strategic pathways to address social and economic inequality in policy development.

Some social theories resonate with their audience, becoming popular and sparking much discussion; intersectionality is one such example. Why some theories manage to cross over from academia to policy and activism may simply be, as the cultural sociologist Murray Davis argues, because they are usually interesting. In his view, these theories generally stand out from our "taken for granted world of old truths" and speak to an audience's primary concern with a specific problem.[4]

> **Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there.**
>
> *Kimberlé Crenshaw*

As intersectionality has increasingly become part of mainstream discussions on inequality, there have been criticisms that it is too vague while others claim that this is its strength. Regardless, the theory and its application encourage us to **reach out to groups and communities who are marginalised** and then **ask questions, listen to different voices and seek to find collaborative solutions**.

Interest from practitioners, policymakers and researchers has been slowly growing as it becomes apparent that those who have institutional and structural power need to broaden their knowledge of the social world, including marginalised groups with unique lived insights on intersectionality that can constructively inform equality agendas at local, regional and national levels.

With intersectionality's rise in popularity, it is important to keep in mind that gender, race/ethnicity and class are analytical categories with distinct approaches to solving problems and overcoming the challenges of inequality and discrimination. It is also critical that intersectionality does not end up merely being a buzzword, which would diminish what the theory has to impart and its potential application to learn more about the lives of all our citizens, not to mention dilute its capacity to radically transform our societies. Care should also be taken to not simply put people in different boxes but to instead embrace a society in which the living experience has its worth and individual feelings are valued.

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i) While the terms "race" and "ethnicity" have distinct meanings (see Footnote ii on the next page), this publication will often use "race/ethnicity" in an effort to simplify and render the text more understandable to European readers.

Gender, race/ethnicity and class are social constructs and used as mechanisms to organise societies.

Social construction is structured around shared understandings and meanings that, generally speaking, are collectively assigned to social categories.

Social construction usually centres on dominant perspectives that become the prevailing social norms, which are then reinforced by the media, religion, popular culture, politics and the law.
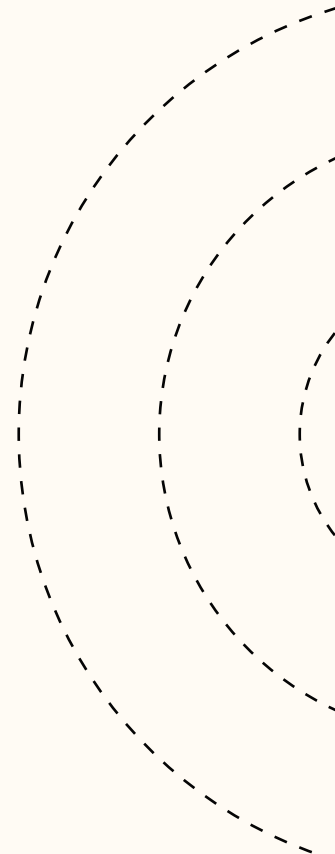
Class

"Social classes are groups of individuals with similar levels of power and status in society. Income, wealth, education and occupation are key determinants of class. Some models, including the Great British Class Survey, have also added cultural and social capital into how class is defined."[5]

Gender

"Social attributes and opportunities associated with being female and male and to the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as to the relations between women and those between men."[6]

Race[ii]

"Race is a categorisation that is based mainly on physical attributes or traits, assigning people to a specific race simply by having similar appearances or skin colour (for example, Black or White). It is now widely accepted that race is a social construct. However, having been racialised and shared common experiences of racism, racial identity is important to many and can be a basis for collective organising and support for racially minoritised individuals."[7]

ii) Regarding the terms "race" versus "ethnicity": they are commonly used, often interchangeably. However, they do not hold the same meaning. The UK Law Society makes the following distinctions: "Ethnicity is broader than race and has usually been used to refer to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or national origins (for example, African-Caribbean, Indian, Irish)."

Besides looking at the three pillars upon which intersectionality is built, there are other characteristics or identity influences that should be taken into consideration when evaluating how a policy may impact people in a society. Lists are inherently problematic as they can imply a hierarchy and are almost never exhaustive of all possibilities. However, for informational purposes, in addition to class, gender and race/ethnicity, intersectional analysis can take into account inter alia: age, (dis)ability, occupation, education, gender identity, sex characteristics, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion/beliefs, nationality, citizenship, family status, and migration background.

In response to the criticism that intersectionality is too complicated and difficult to work with, this is understandable. It is nonetheless worth examining how **intersectionality can become a collective project of learning and discovery** that transfigures the dimensions of discrimination. A commitment to engaging with this work calls for all of us to challenge the existing social order and the social constructs that perpetuate anachronistic norms and stereotypes.

> ## There is fear around implementing intersectionality—it is time to lose the fear. Everybody is entitled to try.

Manuel Rosas Vázquez, Rainbow Cities Network

This section introduced the key elements of intersectionality from theory to practice. With respect to the latter, Crenshaw's logic would suggest that, by bringing in the most marginalised citizens towards the centre of our communities and understanding how multiple axes of discrimination can be experienced concurrently, policies and practices tackling discrimination can be made more effective.

What intersectionality can certainly do is encourage the development of new tools to shine a spotlight on knowledge that is hidden in the margins of our societies, possibly leading to fresh takeaway points and the realisation of the goal of true inclusion in our communities.
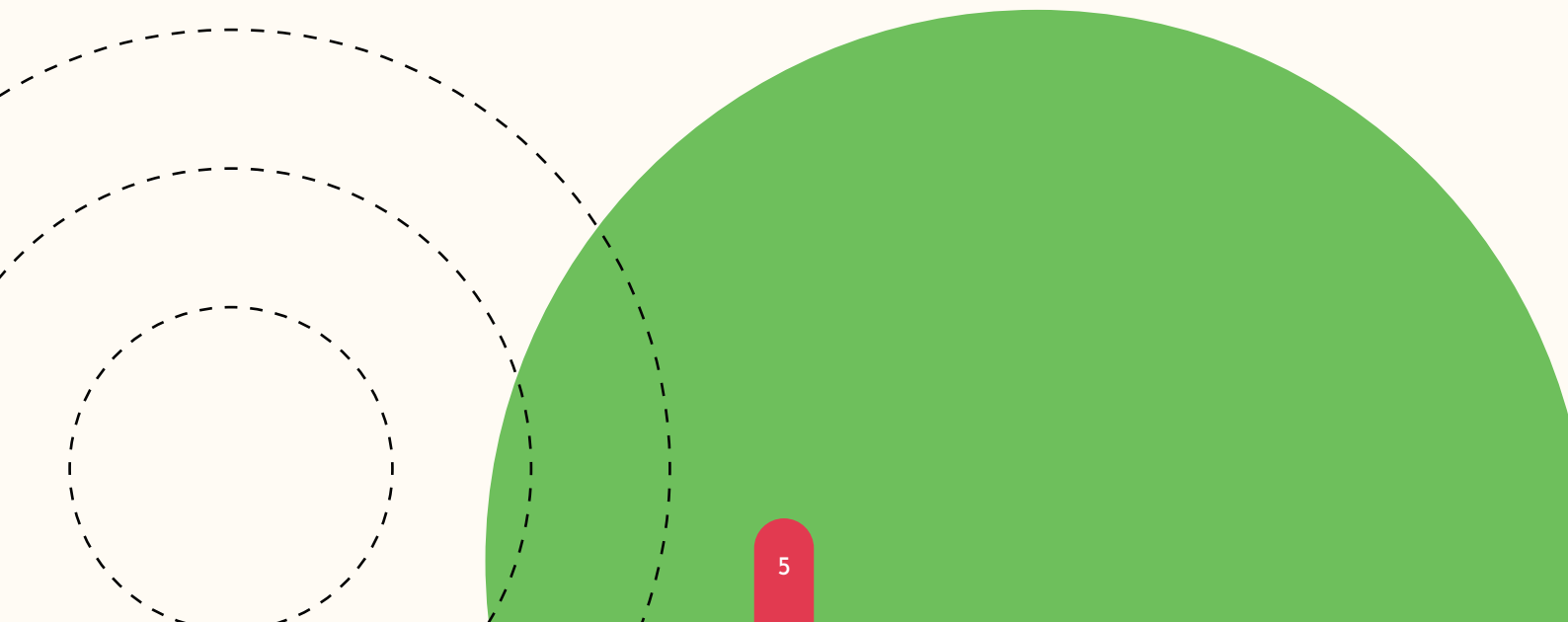
2. Equality and Non-discrimination: A Patchwork of Policies

Before taking on the implementation of intersectionality in local policies, it is important to first consider the **established equality policy and legal contexts** as well as discourses that have evolved over time at European and global levels.

Building on the 1948 **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** (see box), international and European institutions have developed legal and policy frameworks that address specific groups of people separately and which are articulated around a single ground approach to discrimination. In that light, the development of a framework addressing gender and protecting women's rights has been a rather dynamic process: the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 1979 and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of the United Nations of 1995 represent two of its milestones and underscore the relevance of the topic at the international level.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Declaration[8] consists of a preamble and 30 articles defining the fundamental rights and freedoms to which every person, everywhere in the world – with no distinction of nationality, place of residence, gender, national or ethnic origin, religion, language, or any other status – is entitled.

Article 2 states, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."

On the European side, equality between women and men has been one of the Union's founding principles, dating back to 1957 when the principle of equal pay for equal work was enshrined in the Treaty of Rome, and affirmed once again in the European Commission's latest Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025). Thus, up until recently, the work carried out to protect women from discrimination operated according to an additive logic, meaning that grounds for discrimination were addressed individually, one after the other. With an increased interest in intersectionality in the academic world and in public discourse, there have been attempts within the European institutions to build a more comprehensive policy context that addresses intersecting forms of discrimination.

The European Commission has, in recent years, embraced more explicitly the concept of intersectionality, framing it as a cross-cutting principle to be applied across European legislation. Accordingly, it has also recognised the relevance of the concept, alongside others, in its Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025; Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025; Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030; the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025; and Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion 2021-2027. As part of this new framework, in 2022, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on intersectional discrimination in the EU and the socio-economic situation of women of African, Middle-Eastern, Latin-American and Asian descent, which breaks new ground as the first EU document specifically focused on the topic of intersectionality.

Thus, this intersectionality primer for local and regional governments – in direct continuity with CEMR's European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life – aims to constructively coincide with the overall movement towards the inclusion of intersectionality in policy discourse and the opening up of a legal context to its application.

Municipalities and Regions: Fertile Ground for Intersectionality

The Europe of today is made up of 114 534 towns and cities, 1 058 provinces and counties and 353 regions.[9] The situation regarding territorial units differs among European nations and, over the years, several national reforms have aimed at **reducing the number of municipalities or regions, resulting in the emergence of national associations of LRGs as central players.**

As a result of these various reforms, **European municipalities increasingly operate in the very areas of intervention where an intersectional approach to policy development may prove effective**, namely: housing, social and welfare services, health, spatial and urban planning, culture and sport, youth, local economy and finance, employment, education, childcare, public transport, municipal and local police. All these competences fall, partially or totally, within the remit of LRGs in most European countries.

The European Union is composed of a complex and ever-evolving patchwork of local and regional governments. Their competences and responsibilities are often shared with central and other sub-national tiers of government.

These territorial and governance reforms underway on our continent encourage a more effective share of responsibility between the various levels of government and can be viewed as an indication of democracy in motion.

3. Intersectionality in Local Life

The way in which discrimination can be experienced across many dimensions and impact the lives of individuals and citizens is not rigid or static and is sensitive to the institutional and structural power exercised by LRGs in their communities. Examples of such power exist, for example, in policy design, beginning with when decisions are taken regarding the policy's intended beneficiaries, its funding, its impact and how this is measured.

Vitoria Gasteiz, Basque Country, Spain
Understanding the realities of the LGBTI population

As part of the preparatory groundwork for its 4th Gender Equality Plan, the Basque Municipality of Vitoria-Gasteiz conducted a comprehensive **diagnostic and consultation process** with members of the LGBTI community to collect their experiences in the areas of education, work, health and leisure from a feminist and intersectional perspective.

The aim of the analysis was to acquire greater knowledge on how discrimination is experienced by this group of citizens and to identify what actions could ensure that equality policies address the needs expressed. The work was carried out by the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council (Servicio de Igualdad, Departamento de Alcaldía y Relaciones Institucionales) and financed by Emakunde, the Basque equality institute specialising in gender issues.

The results were included in Vitoria-Gasteiz's Hara! *Agenda to incorporate sexual and gender diversity in equality policies*, which highlights the use of intersectionality as an analytical and practical tool for the city's study of public policy on equality. The Hara! programme incorporating sexual and gender

diversity prioritises a series of actions called for by LGTBI people and groups during the diagnostic and consultation process, based on the following main criteria:

- Direct positive impact on LGTBI people;
- Contribution to shifting of values in the organisational culture of the City Council and/or in society;
- Sustainability (in the case of actions that require it) and economic viability;
- Identification by more than one source;
- Alignment with Hara! IV Plan for Gender Equality in Vitoria-Gasteiz.

In addition, Vitoria-Gasteiz has been supporting the **Ikusgune Observatory** against LGTBI+phobia. It serves as a permanent watch system against homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia and is run by Lumagorri ZAT (Zisheterosexismoaren Aurkako Taldea) in collaboration with the Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council.

Identities and Lived Experience

Every citizen possesses an identity that is influenced by internal and external factors which ebb and flow through various phases of their lifespan. **Choice, privilege and opportunity are not the same for everyone** and LRGs' understanding of the varied needs of citizens can be enhanced by using an intersectional approach and by working hand-in-hand with the people directly concerned.

Brussels, Belgium
Gender-sensitive welcome for newcomers

In its fourth **Equality Action Plan (2020-2022)**, the City of Brussels adopted a transversal and multidisciplinary approach to gender equality, implemented both internally and with partners. In addition, gender equality was effectively integrated into all the themes handled by the office for Equal Opportunities.

Aware that leaving one's country, one's culture and sometimes one's family, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, can be traumatic on multiple levels, the City of Brussels was cognizant of the fact that newcomers to Belgium then have to tackle additional significant challenges: acquiring a new language, culture and network in order to rebuild a new life. Many newcomers face a lot of prejudices and difficulties during this process.

The Equality Action plan states: "For women newcomers, discrimination can be twofold, even threefold on account of being a woman, a foreigner and not knowing the language, all which complicates the process of inclusion. These multiple discriminations have a direct impact on the ability of women to exercise their rights, ensure their safety and acquire their place in society."

To respond to these complex challenges and better support migrant women in Brussels, the BXL Feminist Action Plan proposed three targeted actions:

ACTION 1: Train the social support staff of BAPA BXL[iii] on issues of violence against women.

ACTION 2: Fight against sex trafficking of newly arrived women.

ACTION 3: Organise activities and spaces focusing exclusively on women newcomers.

Supporting migrant women was the main focus of the three-year cooperation between the City of Brussels and the municipality of Saint-Jean-de-La-Ruelle (France), organised under the IncluCities project. The support of BAPA Brussels and the City of Brussels and the many partner exchanges led to the creation of a Women's House (Maison des femmes) in Saint-Jean-de-La-Ruelle. These actions also informed the municipality's development of a local policy to help migrant women.

iii) **BAPA BXL** is a not-for-profit that offers newcomers to Brussels individual support and tools to lead their lives independently. BAPA BXL addresses gender in an interconnected way throughout their programme which consists of a friendly welcome, identification of their needs and a social support service.

Intersectionality has an identity component, but it is not only about identity. **At its core, intersectionality is about where, when, why and how institutional and structural power interacts with citizens to the benefit of some but not others**. The *Identity Influences* graphic below was developed for this primer to make it easier to visualise the relationship between identity and power.
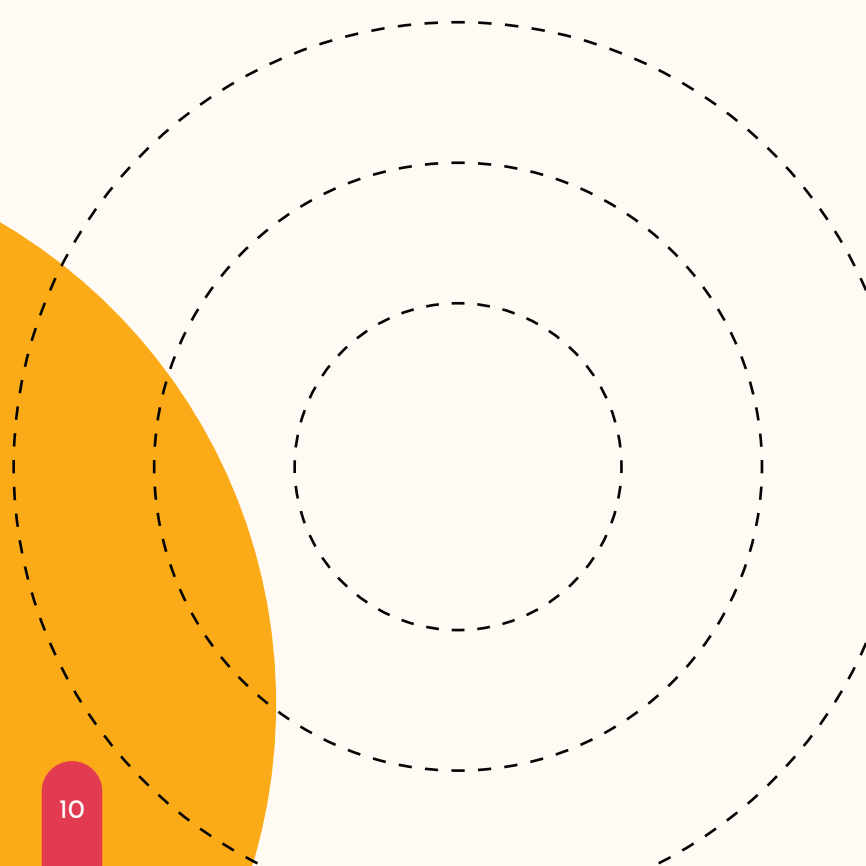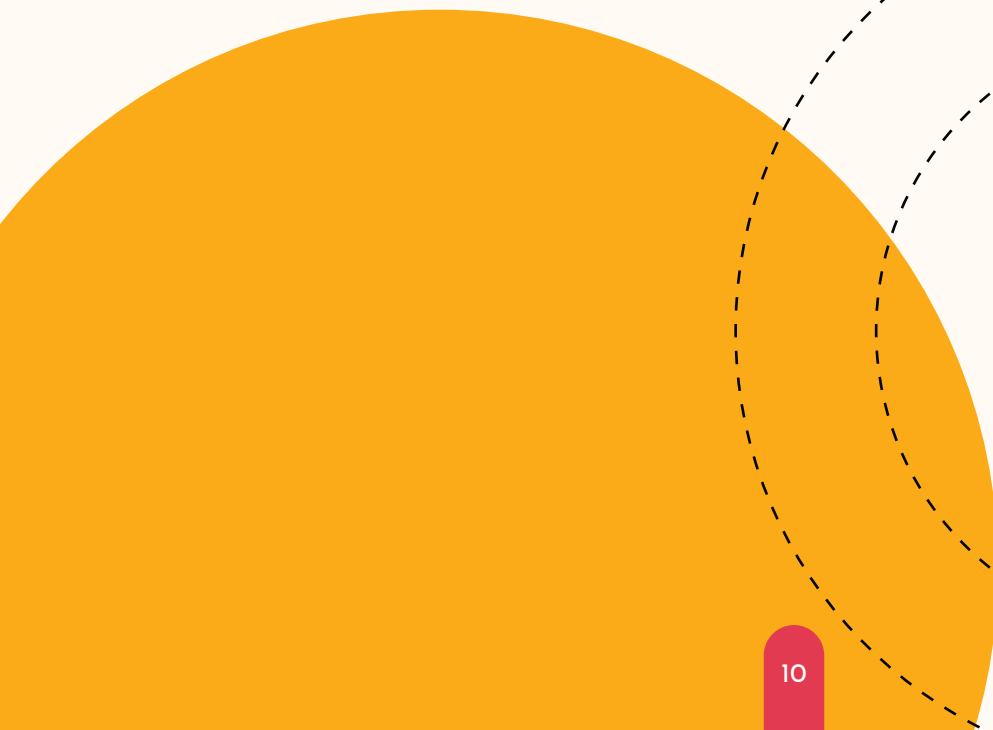
> **The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways.**
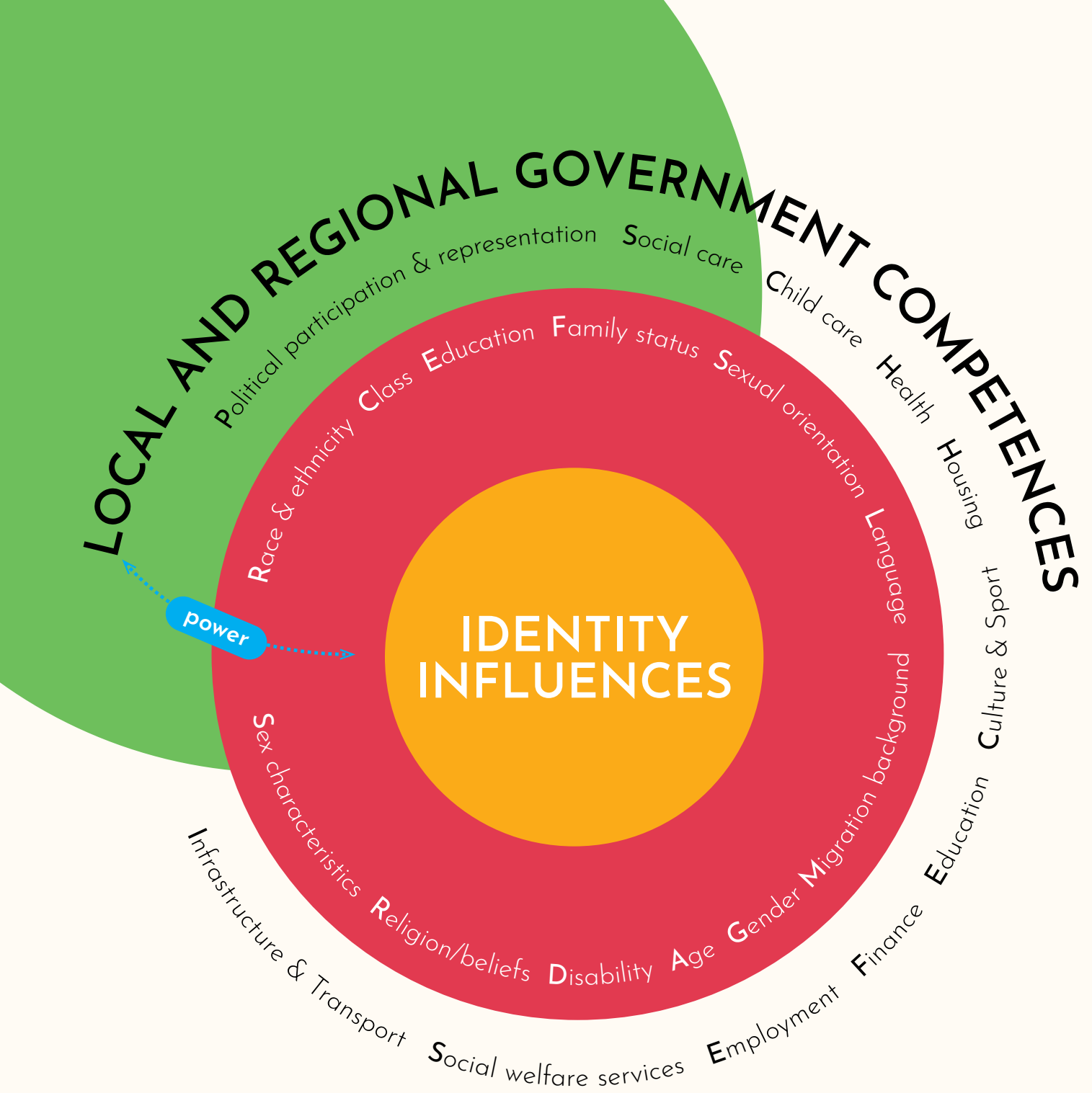
Sirma Bilge and Patricia Hill Collins

Graphics are useful tools for communicating complex ideas to audiences as they can help elucidate information, capture the reader's attention and illustrate relationships and patterns. The *Identity Influences* graphic on the next page has two circles which should be seen as fluid and energetic. The relationship between the two circles is dynamic, potentially intersecting across the internal and external influences in an individual's life at any given moment.

The inner circle is a selection (not exhaustive) of characteristics that, at any one time, may be present and active in a person's life. The outer circle indicates areas where LRG competences are operating through policy and practice, directly and indirectly, affecting the daily lives of citizens positively and negatively, often depending on their identity.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT COMPETENCES

Political participation & representation · Social care · Child care · Health · Housing · Culture & Sport · Education · Finance · Employment · Social welfare services · Infrastructure & Transport

IDENTITY INFLUENCES

power

Race & ethnicity · Class · Education · Family status · Sexual orientation · Language · Migration background · Gender · Age · Disability · Religion/beliefs · Sex characteristics
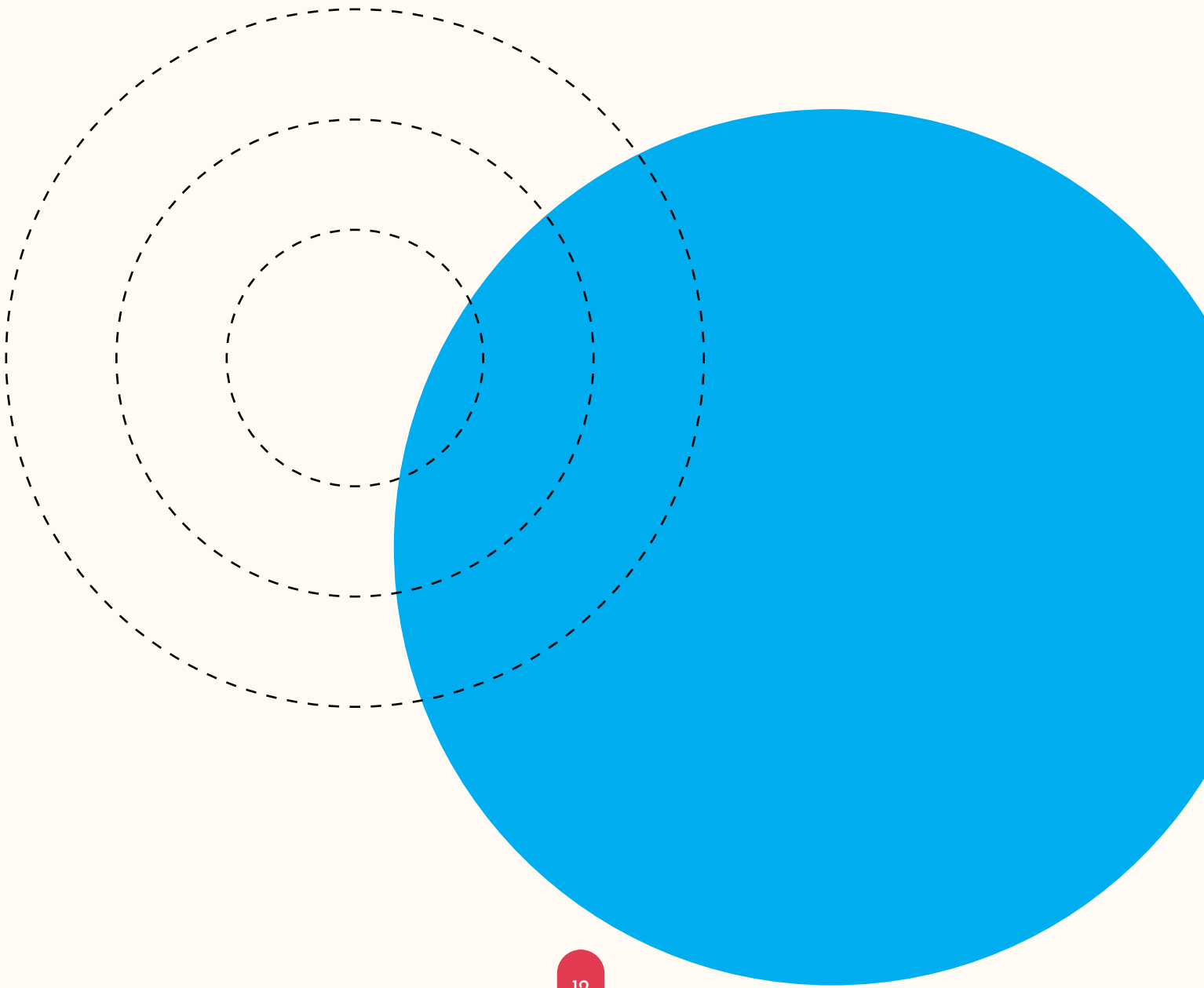
Graphic 1 – Identity Influences

The aim of the graphic is to:

1. Illustrate the complex realities of citizens and where they intersect with local and regional governments' actions.

2. Encourage more questions from policymakers who seek to apply intersectionality.

3. Highlight how intersectionality, while challenging, can kindle greater awareness and sensitivity towards those who experience discrimination and stimulate calls for new ideas for inclusive policies.

"
A person is not, for example, a woman on one hand and disabled on the other; rather she is the combination of these at the same time, that is, a disabled woman. In this example her identity as a woman is shaped by her identity as disabled, and vice versa as the elements of identity are not lived or experienced separately.
"

Ashlee Christoffersen

The River Delta: Visualising Channels of Power

The *Identity Influences* graphic focuses on the relationship between the individual and society, highlighting the importance of understanding how discrimination can occur in the lived experiences of those who are marginalised.

Visualising inequalities and how they interact with each other is difficult. Equally difficult is visualising structural and institutional systems of power and how such power may benefit some and simultaneously be invisible to them. Failure to take these intersections into account can lead to discrimination and to individuals being marginalised by institutions.

The visibility of advantage is often most acutely recognised by those who do not have it. However, it is important that any intellectual approach to intersectionality not inadvertently create any hierarchies of inequality along the way – that is not the desired outcome.

The *River Delta* graphic below was conceived for this primer to illustrate how power is central to the distribution of resources. Without the knowledge of lived experiences from citizens experiencing intersectional discrimination, any progress towards equal and inclusive societies will be limited.

The *River Delta* graphic has three aims:

1. To draw attention to the cornerstones of intersectionality – gender, race/ethnicity and class.

2. To highlight where power flows and how it can be channelled in unfair and unequal ways.

3. To help readers visualise the silos of discrimination and exclusion that can exist in the lives of citizens and how the redistribution of power and resources can be potentially transformative.

The Delta is a visual representation of society as a whole (not groups or individuals) at any given moment. It is a graphical tool that can be useful for policymakers as they work on policy planning. The graphic can help us better grasp the complexities in our society and challenge our accepted viewpoints, broadening them to also **consider other perspectives and variables for policy and decision-making.**

The source of the river represents the institutional and structural power that issues forth from LRGs. Rather than flowing straight, the water meanders and deviates around the various land barriers which represent potential grounds of discrimination present in a society.

Each society has unique characteristics that are shaped and evolve in response to internal and external forces. As a result, as a representation of a society, every river delta is constantly mutating.

power

gender

race/ethnicity

migration background

language

sexual orientation

class

disability

religion or beliefs

education level

citizenship

gender expression

sex characteristics

family status

age

Graphic 2 – River Delta

LRGs can use the *River Delta* graphic to help viewers understand and visualise how their society is composed, making it easier to identify how the main grounds of discrimination are cross-cutting and how this affects people. LRGs can then take decisions that influence how the mainstream deviates to allow for smoother waterflow through the pieces of land. The *River Delta* graphic aims to help LRGs come up with better and more effective planning, leading to delivery of local policies that meet the needs of all territories and societies.

Why the Delta Model?

Every delta is different, as seen in the two photos below. A delta can show how the river and land intersect, creating pools, streams and lobes, all while the river continues to flow from its source.

Intersectionality presents similarities with a delta in that it is formed and connects in a variety of ways that can have significant (positive and negative, inclusive or exclusionary) impacts on citizens' lives. The delta is useful as a graphical tool that can assist in mapping the compounding effects of discrimination and inequality to enable the development of strategies to tackle challenges and obstacles hindering the delivery of inclusion.

Using the visual of a delta and understanding its value to the environment provides one way to reframe our thinking about intersectionality. This approach can also assist those working to integrate the theory into policy and practice.

The chart below uses the features of the delta to formulate questions and research directions that could be of assistance to local and regional policymakers just starting the process of introducing an intersectional approach to an issue(s).
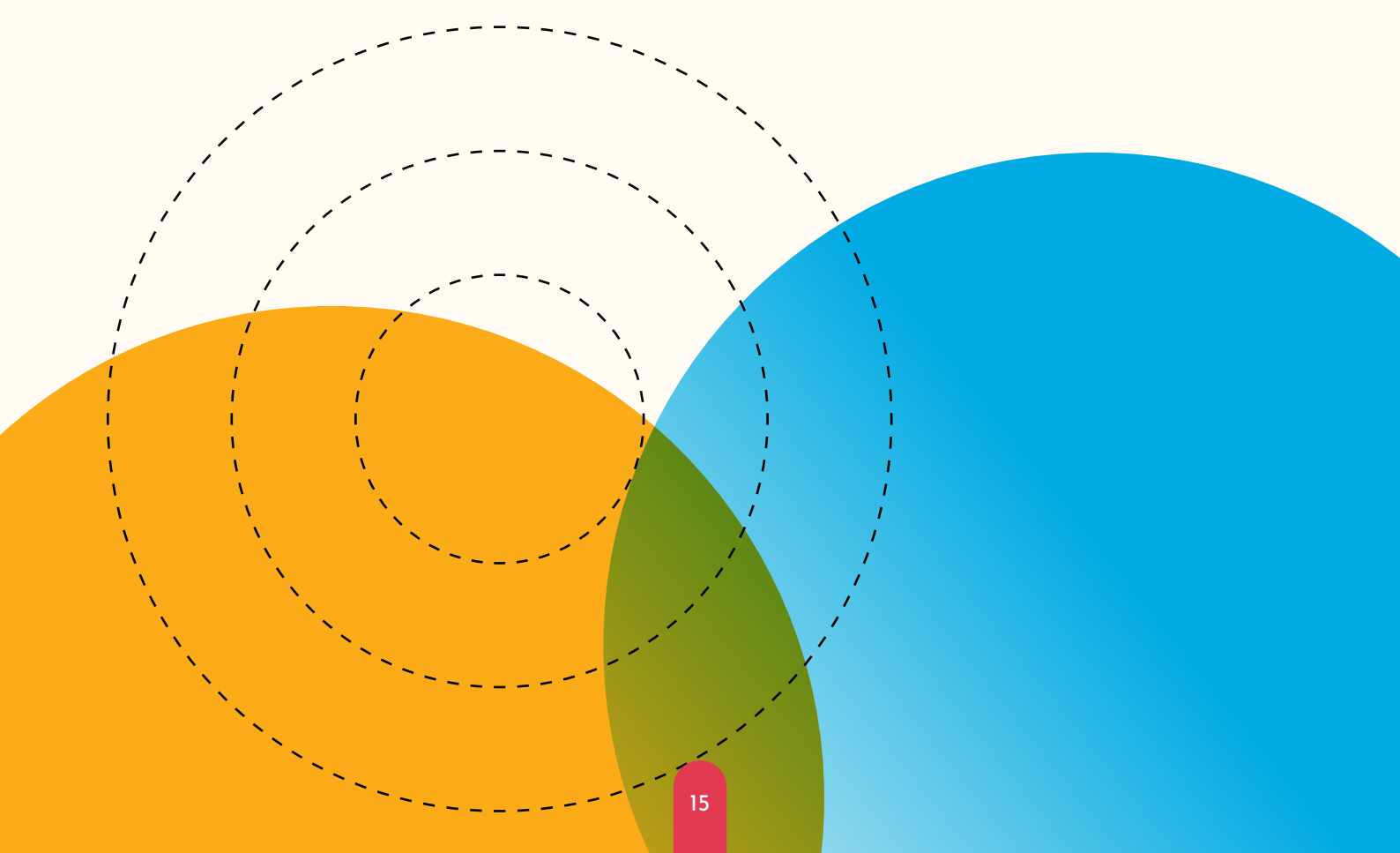
Use the delta as a guide for thinking about intersectionality

Deltas support diverse ecosystems.

Who lives in the community?

What are their values? How do they want to live and what do they need from local and regional governments to live well?

A community is an ecosystem that contains micro ecosystems existing within. Intersectionality offers an opportunity to identify and examine the diverse layers of these systems and gain richer knowledge about citizens.

Deltas are fertile, absorb the impact of floods and filter water.

Regardless of where you are positioned in the community, your life experiences are likely to differ from those positioned elsewhere. The delta model demonstrates how local and regional governments can improve their policies' impact by considering various grounds of discrimination present in their societies and contemplating which represent advantages or obstacles that can positively and negatively influence groups in the community.

The model encourages considerations of gender, race/ethnicity, class, religion, social class, sex, disability, etc.

Every step taken to better understand marginalised groups in our communities contributes to a foundation of knowledge for social change.

The delta has shifting layers and connecting channels on and below the surface. Change is slow-moving, constant yet unpredictable.

Who lives in the community?

Understand who the marginalised groups are in your community at any given moment—and how power is situated and distributed throughout—and therefore who is at risk of exclusion. This can guide an LRG's approach to how to change/shape outcomes through policy.

Identifying the context and its ever-changing nature can be a useful first step in adopting an intersectional approach to policy making.

4. Let's Get Started! What Can LRGs Do?

Several starting tips for integrating an intersectional approach at local and regional levels are outlined below.

Internal Coordination

To get started, it is useful to first **determine the existing level of knowledge** about gender equality, discrimination, inclusion and intersectionality within the administration and where there may be potential gaps. In areas where training and education are identified as a need, LRGs should hire or **seek out the relevant experts, civil society organisations and academics** to discuss training programmes, their delivery and follow-up. Furthermore, this process calls for continuous dialogue engagement and co-design work with the civil society organisations directly concerned in order to ensure that needs are properly understood and to avoid the further distortion of putting people into other restrictive category boxes.

Each local/regional administration is organised differently and possesses its own context and dynamics. Irrespective of whether gender equality, non-discrimination and inclusion are grouped together within a same department or spread across different divisions, it is always a good idea to **think together**. The 2019 "Toolkit to incorporate intersectionality into local policies"[10] produced by the Terrassa City Council suggests:

» Creating shared frameworks based on the establishment of shared regulations;

» Conducting training sessions unifying diverse areas;

» Creating spaces to bring together information or share processes across different services (diagnosis, participative processes, strategic plans, services...);

» Working on problems rather than focusing on identities;

» Reflecting upon common challenges faced by different departments is a good starting point.

Consider creating internal cross-functional teams to support the development of intersectionality throughout the organisation.

In its **2022-2025 Equality and Non-discrimination Plan for Services**, the City of Helsinki decided to combine its equality and non-discrimination dimensions into a single document. Striving for intersectionality was a key factor behind the decision and it represents one of the four guiding principles on which the measures presented in the plan are based.

The city had already introduced measures in its 2019-2021 action plan on gender equality in services that ensured other characteristics that affect citizens' experiences and discrimination were also being considered. Within its Social Services and Health Care Division, the city sought to improve recognition of gender and family diversity and to give them greater consideration in terms of customer service situations and service development. To achieve this, personnel were provided with training on gender and family diversity.

Helsinki's Executive Office also set itself the goal of strengthening equal participation for citizens representing various genders, gender minorities and gender identities. To this end, a guidebook for learning more about norm-sensitive communications (including gender, but also applicable to age, ethnic background, etc.) was published and made available on the city's intranet. Photo shoots were also carried out with diverse models to enrich the visual materials available in the City of Helsinki's Material Bank.

Establishing Connections and Community Outreach

Exploring and adjusting power dynamics are key to unpacking intersectionality. However, to ensure all voices are heard, **opportunities for wide discussions with multiple stakeholders must be created and facilitated**, e.g. a roundtable that provides childcare. As well as to inform policy decisions, the voices and languages of marginalised groups should also be harnessed as part of the support process, providing a valuable perspective in teaching LRGs how to identify gaps in internal knowledge.

give it a go

1. **Invite and involve members** of the community and representative associations to take part early on in discussions/consultations as their unique individual perspectives can provide insightful contributions to humanising discourses.

2. **Connect with universities** involved in intersectional research or hosting events to explore potential collaboration and knowledge sharing.

3. **Consider using the graphics** in the primer to develop your own map of issues and priorities that reflect how intersectionality can be implemented in policy planning and development. The graphics could be a useful tool for sharing goals with internal and external stakeholders.

4. **Meet people where they are.** Ensure that the organisation of opportunities for dialogue and consultation does not exclude participants (accessibility, child care, work hours).

5. **Value the voices** of those experiencing intersectional discrimination and consider providing compensation for people's time and expertise.

Çankaya, Türkiye
Inclusive outreach

The municipality of Çankaya's **3rd Equality Action Plan 2019-2023** has been exemplary not only in terms of the broad and participative consultation process carried out to develop the action plan, but also in how the concerns of diverse groups of women were taken into account and reflected in the proposed measures. Çankaya is the second largest municipal district in Turkey and they aim to set an example for other municipalities to follow.

NGOs and associations representing different groups, including disabled persons, businesses and entrepreneurs, parents, lawyers, trade unions, youth, academia, children's rights, asylum-seekers and migrants, engineers, all participated in developing the municipal action plan and later monitoring it throughout its implementation by holding regular meetings.

Some highlights of the Action Plan include:

• Ensuring the equal participation of women in local decision-making processes by conducting a needs assessment, via thematic meetings, to uncover problems that different groups of women encounter (target groups include: elderly women, poor women, students, women with disabilities).

• Providing priority access to shelters for disadvantaged groups of women (single mothers, those living in poverty and refugees).

Data Collection and Evaluation

Reliable and disaggregated statistics (by age, gender, etc.) are critical to gaining knowledge about our communities and the needs of citizens. Data can effectively inform strategy and support the development of clear, context-driven policy goals.

Collecting disaggregated data by gender, race/ethnicity and class should be a priority for LRGs in rectifying their existing data gaps. However, it is also essential to accept the limitations and regulations pertaining to the collection of sensitive data and proceed mindfully when using proxies to collect data on race/ethnicity.

The Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data recommends that data collection using an intersectional approach should keep in mind the following: Governments should commit to ensuring that the data collection is centred on the voices of the individuals at greatest risk of marginalisation or discrimination. This means **accepting that lived experience is a valid form of evidence**.

> **The ways data is currently collected and used often leads to those at greatest risk of marginalisation being hidden, excluded, or discriminated against.**

Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

Trust is a key challenge that needs to be acknowledged when collecting data, especially in relation to those who are less visible or marginalised in society.

1. **Provide clear explanations** of why data is being collected and how it will be used and protected in accordance with the relevant legal standards.

2. **Promote equity throughout** the data process. At the start of data collection preparations, consider:

   - Who has been included in identifying what data to collect and how to collect it?
   - Who is conducting the analysis?
   - How can the data be used to tell a story of intersecting inequality and influence policy?
   - How is inequality going to be measured?

Bristol, United Kingdom
Open data on equalities

The City of Bristol, a long-time signatory of the **European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life**, adopted an **Equality and Inclusion Policy and Strategy** that was developed to:

- Tackle equalities issues
- Eliminate discrimination
- Create good relationships between communities in Bristol
- Ensure those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities

Part of its commitment to delivery of this Strategy is ensuring appropriate equalities data is available and is used to inform decision-making. To this end, the Open Data Bristol project has assembled data and information about Bristol, including useful particulars about people with protected or *other relevant characteristics, including carers and people living in the most deprived areas of the city.*

The Quality of Life (QoL) survey "provides an annual snapshot of the quality of life in Bristol, including measures of inequality [...and...] information about community cohesion, satisfaction with services, health, sustainability, and crime."

The results of the annual QoL survey are publicly available on Open Data Portal, where information can be disaggregated according to several 'Equality and Demographic Groups'[11] to provide insight into how intersecting identities can have an impact on citizen's access to decision-making and services in the City as well as their perceptions of quality of life.

Conclusion

Instead of approaching intersectionality as another item to add to the seemingly never-ending list of things to do and requirements to fulfil, we hope that the material presented here demonstrates the added value that this conceptual shift can bring to local and regional governments' policies and programmes.

Intersectionality is a prism through which heretofore unseen layers of reality can be uncovered and read in all their multiple facets and interconnectedness. By querying and recognising the complexity of the lived dimensions of citizens and their experiences, LRGs can take the first step to reducing exclusion, creating new opportunities for policy innovation and boosting civic participation and the engagement of the population.

Compartmentalised thinking or only considering one dimension of citizens' complex identities risks discounting a huge percentage of the population. This is an unacceptable outcome, as local and regional governments are responsible for managing and providing services to all, on an equal basis.

> **When you do policies for the most disadvantaged, it is good for everyone. As a public service, you cannot do it in another way.**
>
> *Mireia Espiau Idoyaga, Vitoria-Gasteiz Municipality*

There is no simple, one-size-fits-all solution to incorporating an intersectional approach into local and regional governance and policy. The goal is to introduce solutions and policy that make people's lives better. It is not a question of ticking off boxes but of producing a positive impact. Every step takes us in the right direction and towards each other, but it is a process that takes time.

As showcased in the good examples from Belgium, Finland, Spain, Turkey, and the United Kingdom, it is possible to produce an impactful change in the various areas where LRGs are competent to govern. Engagement can consist of many different actions: from broadening outreach and consultations so that the less visible in society are given a voice early on in processes that concern them to undertaking the more complex and long-term investment of collecting and analysing data about the different groups and needs present on the territory.

CEMR hopes that this publication will inspire you to take the first steps, or perhaps provide you with fresh ideas as you continue on your journey towards prompting a vibrant dialogue and finding intersectional responses to local challenges that meet the needs of all citizens on your territory.

Glossary

Disability	Disability (as opposed to impairment) is only disabling as a result of societal attitudes and barriers. The United Nations Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities defines persons with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.[12]
Ethnicity	Ethnicity is broader than race and has usually been used to refer to long shared cultural experiences, religious practices, traditions, ancestry, language, dialect or national origins (for example, African-Caribbean, Indian, Irish).[13]
Gender Equality	Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, thereby recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development.[14]
Gender Expression	Refers to people's manifestation of their gender identity, and the one that is perceived by others. Typically, people seek to make their gender expression or presentation match their gender identity/identities, irrespective of the sex that they were assigned at birth.[15]
Gender Identity	Each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms.[16]
LGBTQIA+	Umbrella term used to denote individuals from the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, Intersex and Asexual Community. It is worth being aware that variations of this term exist, such as LGB, LGBT, GLBT, LGBTQ+ and LGBTI.[17]

Multiple Discrimination	Multiple discrimination refers to separate simultaneous identity-based cases of discrimination targeted at an individual. For example, an LGBTQ person with disabilities might be discriminated against in the workplace when an employer fails to make proper allowance for access to all parts of the office for wheelchair users. In addition, this individual might be a target of homophobic slurs in the same office. In cases like this, the legal framework exists to address multiple, separate claims of discrimination, whereas intersectional discrimination takes place on grounds that are intertwined in such a way that they produce a unique and new type of discrimination.[18]
Sex	Refers to the biological and physiological characteristics that define humans as female or male.[19]
Sex Characteristics	Sex characteristics include, but are not limited to sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal structure and/or levels and/or chromosomal patterns. Variations in sex characteristics may manifest themselves in primary characteristics (such as the inner and outer genitalia and the chromosomal and hormonal structure) and/or secondary characteristics (such as muscle mass, hair distribution and stature).[20]
Sex-Disaggregated Data	Data collected and tabulated separately for women and men allowing the measurement of differences between women and men in terms of various social and economic dimensions and are one of the requirements to obtaining gender statistics.[21]
Sexual Orientation	Each person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, the same gender or more than one gender.[22]

Acknowledgements

Sounding Board and Good Practices

To ensure the primer would be comprehensive and informative, CEMR organised a Sounding Board Workshop during the drafting stages to exchange views with representatives from European networks and associations specialised in equality strands and familiar with intersectionality in practice. During a roundtable exchange, participants were asked to share their impressions and opinions of the first draft of the primer, including its visual elements, as well as their experiences with LRGs. The objective was to bridge CEMR's organisational and experiential limitations by gathering insights and reactions from people representing those most concerned and impacted by intersecting inequalities. It proved to be an ideal opportunity to include, discover and connect with a wide range of different perspectives and experiences.

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Endnotes

1 The European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life – www.charter-equality.eu

2 Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989) "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics."

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5 https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/lgbt-lawyers/diversity-and-inclusion-dictionary

6 https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1141

7 https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language

8 https://www.ohchr.org/en/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

9 https://www.ccre.org/en/actualites/view/4255

10 https://igualtatsconnect.cat/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Publicacion-Igualtats-Connect-ENG-1.pdf

11 Bristol average, Female, Male, BME (Black and Minority Ethnic Groups), WME (White Minority Ethnic Groups), LGB (Lesbian Gay Bisexual), 16 to 24 years, 50 years and older, 65 years and older, Carer, Disabled, No Religion or Faith, Religion or Faith

12 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Article 1

13 https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ethnic-minority-lawyers/a-guide-to-race-and-ethnicity-terminology-and-language

14 https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1168

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19 https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1361

20 https://www.ilga-europe.org/about-us/who-we-are/glossary/

21 https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1366

22 https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1380

About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) has the broadest membership of local and regional governments in Europe of any organisation. Its members consist of more than 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 40 European countries. Together, these associations represent some 100 000 local and regional governments.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional governments and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

On the international stage, CEMR is the European Section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

www.cemr.eu

About the Observatory

CEMR launched the Observatory of the European Charter for Equality in 2012 to support Charter signatories in their efforts to implement the Charter and advance gender equality. The online platform showcases good practices and examples of successful local gender equality policies and facilitates peer-learning amongst signatories. It also includes guidance on how to elaborate an equality action plan and features a database (the "Atlas"), which provides contact information and links to signatories' gender equality action plans.

The work of the Observatory is coordinated by the CEMR Secretariat, in collaboration with the CEMR Standing Committee for Equality and an expert group composed of national coordinators/gender focal points from CEMR member associations.

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