

Incorporating an intersectional perspective into local community cultural facilities: identifying priority areas

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ABSTRACT

The integration of an intersectional perspective in the analysis and response to inequality and discrimination has become frequent in recent years because of the need to develop more complex approaches in these areas. This article aimed to present some initial reflections and approaches to the transfer of this perspective to the practice of local cultural facilities (e.g., community centres). To this end, we provide a definition of the intersectional perspective and its implications and apply it to the practice of local cultural management, including the identification of a range of conceptual and practical challenges. The work concludes by distinguishing a set of priority areas for the mainstreaming of intersectionality as part of the management of local cultural facilities: baseline analysis, training, consultation and participation spaces, programming, mediation, and evaluation and learning processes. Despite the complexity involved in implementing these tasks, we suggest that intersectionality should be understood as a progressive learning process that may take advantage of existing initiatives and knowledge in areas including cultural rights, gender, and diversity management.

Keywords: intersectionality, diversity, cultural management, cultural rights, cultural facilities

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INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of an intersectional perspective into the analysis of existing inequalities and discrimination in society, and the response made to these by public policies has received increasing attention in recent years. This is often a response to the finding that the current models for dealing with diversity are incomplete and require more complex approaches.

Intersectionality offers this perspective of greater complexity, but its very nature entails difficulties when implementing it. This is coupled with the fact that, as we will explain throughout the article, the intersectional perspective requires us perform an exercise in interpreting the specific contexts in which it must be applied. Thus, it does not offer universal answers, but rather, an 'analytical sensitivity' or a way of thinking about similarities and differences, and their

relationship with power (Rodó-Zárate, 2021, p. 28), which must be adapted to different realities in terms of the people with whom one interacts, relationships established, and forms of power that are manifested.

In this sense, the intersectional perspective calls for an effort in terms of critical and methodological reflection on the part of those responsible for applying it. This applies both in relation to the gaze towards the outside and to the action itself, which can contribute to ignoring, reproducing, or reinforcing forms of discrimination. This responsibility is greater in the case of services and facilities that fulfil public functions. The aforementioned need for contextualisation also makes it necessary, based on a framework of sensitivity and common action, to think about the specific implications of intersectionality in concrete areas of public action, such as cultural management and policies.

Until now, there have been few specific reflections regarding the incorporation of an intersectional perspective into local cultural management. Thus, this article aimed to make such a contribution, emphasising the role of local cultural facilities, and especially so-called multi-purpose cultural centres. In other words, facilities that, as in the case of civic centres, athenaeums, youth centres, and other similar centres, are characterised by combining cultural, socio-educational, and civic functions, while also being versatile with respect to the activities they host (exhibitions, courses, workshops, small-format shows, meetings, and debates, etc.). They may host activities with groups and external entities, and work with proximity—that is to say, paying attention to the nearest population (at the level of the neighbourhood, district, or municipality, as the case may be)—to establish solid relationships (in relation to this, consult Miralles and Saboya, 2000; Martínez Illa, 2010; and Trànsit Projectes, 2020, among others).

At the European level, similarities have been observed between facilities such as *centros cívicos* (civic centres), *casas de cultura* (cultural centres), *maisons de quartier* (neighbourhood houses), community centres, *soziokulturelle Zentren* (socio-cultural centres), or *chitalishtes* (community centres), among others, which the Budapest Observatory for Cultural Policies grouped under the definition of “multifunctional institutions of local culture” (Budapest Observatory, 2003; Interarts Foundation, 2005). Therefore, the observations offered in this article could be partially applicable to other territories. At the same time, while considering the importance of the contextualisation and situated analysis necessary for any reflection upon intersectionality, we must admit that these contributions might be especially applicable in civic centres and other similar cultural facilities in the context of Catalonia.

Thus, this current article aims to make a contribution applicable to the management of local cultural facilities and analysis of the practices employed in their management. The combination of these perspectives, we believe, makes it possible to fill a gap

that has existed up until now, especially with regard to understanding intersectionality, a framework that has been consolidated mainly at the theoretical level, as well as exploring the specific implications of these perspectives in the field of cultural management. It is, in any case, an initial approximation that, as explained above, must be expanded upon in later work based on the specific implementation of new approximations.

Aspects such as the relationship with the population or the surrounding community and the vocation to simultaneously contribute to the enrichment of cultural life, promote citizen participation from an inclusive perspective, and encourage learning and social cohesion processes, mean that these facilities may be important scenarios regarding the incorporation of an intersectional perspective. So far, there have already been significant experiences in civic centres, libraries, and other local cultural facilities regarding the incorporation of the gender perspective (consult, among others, Alexanian Meacci and the Sagrada Familia Civic Centre, 2019), attention to the diversity of origins, or inclusion of people with functional diversity.

In short, and in the same way that occurs in the provision of other public services and goods, these segmented approaches may be insufficient when facing a reality in which forms of inequality and discrimination intersect, as some analyses have already pointed out (Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2021). Some centres have already incorporated measures with an intersectional perspective. For example, the Civic Centre of the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona does so in areas such as communication by trying to generate new and diverse referents arising from the usual gender roles (Alexanian Meacci and the Civic Centre of the Sagrada Familia, 2019). In the same way, this current article aims to make an initial contribution with a view to a more complex future examination of the diversity of audiences, typical of the intersectional perspective.

In order to do so, we will begin by situating the concept, we will go on to identify the main implications

that intersectionality may have for local cultural management and the challenges it entails, and we will then close the article by identifying aspects of the management of local cultural facilities in which intersectionality must be incorporated as a priority.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND PROXIMITY

What is the intersectional gaze?

Intersectional reflection originated at the end of the 1980s in the USA and was based on verification that neither feminism (which mainly adopted a *white* perspective) nor black activism (which adopted an androcentric point of view) reflected the specific experience of oppression and discrimination suffered by groups such as black women. Hence, in this sense, these standpoints did not sufficiently reflect the internal heterogeneity of the social groups they wanted to represent: “Thus, it was not about adding (following an additive logic), but about understanding that the intersection of the axes of gender and race produces specific realities” (Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales, 2019, p. 17).

Within this framework, intersectionality has been developed through numerous theoretical and practical contributions, which have led to a rich tradition rather than a coherent, rigid, or immutable theory: thus, intersectionality can be interpreted as “a toolbox to understand social inequalities and discrimination in a complex way” (Rodó-Zárate, 2021, p. 19). The notion of a ‘toolbox’ serves to remind us that, ultimately, intersectionality has the vocation of influencing reality in a practical way and of transforming it. This practical or applied character is combined with and, in some way, calls for the ‘analytical sensitivity’ to which we have previously referred: it is not, therefore, only a question of reflection—although critical reflection is inherent to intersectionality—but one of a reflection that aspires to influence action. At the same time, until now there have been more academic contributions around intersectionality on a theoretical level than on a practical one (Coll-Planas and Solà Morales, 2019), a challenge that articles with an applied vocation like this one are trying to start addressing.

Intersectionality emphasises that the different dimensions of or successes regarding discrimination are inseparable and interrelated (Rodó-Zárate, 2021): the way in which gender discrimination is experienced is determined, among other things, by a person’s position in terms of their origin, insofar as the fact of having lived a certain migratory itinerary or being an autochthonous person in a territory implies a specific gender experience, and vice versa. The interrelationships derived from the different axes of discrimination that may be relevant in a certain environment means that any intersectional analysis must be sensitive to specific individual realities and supposes that this is a very contextual or situated exercise that will differ depending on the characteristics of the environment, its demographic reality, and relevant expressions of inequality and discrimination.

In this sense, although it is possible to make a list of the axes that should generally be considered in an intersectional perspective (sex/gender; origin/migration; racialisation; sexual orientation and gender identity; religion/beliefs; age/cycles of life; functional diversity/disability, etc.; see Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales, 2019), it is also common to focus that attention on one axis or another, and the relative weight given to them will depend on social circumstances and specific institutions. In certain countries and moments, aspects such as ideology or language can be important factors of discrimination while, in the same territory, contexts such as school, home, or public spaces can generate different ways of perceiving discrimination. Once again, the analytical sensitivity of the intersectional perspective must help determine which aspects are significant in each context and guide the action in a more pertinent way.

What are its advantages and applications?

Within the framework of the European project *Igualdads Conectadas* (Connected Equalities; 2018–2019), which aimed to advance the implementation of intersectionality in local non-discrimination policies, the sociologist Gerard Coll-Planas and

the political scientist Roser Solà-Morales developed a guide that includes, among other things, the advantages of incorporating an intersectional perspective in municipal work. This guide could also be applicable or adaptable in local cultural policies and in the activities of local cultural facilities.¹ Thus, the intersectional perspective:

- “Shows us the limits of political practices that separate reality and do not allow us to address the intersections between axes of inequality.
- Allows us to go beyond the logic of policies directed at ‘general citizens’ or at specific groups, which is not effective in explaining the nuances and complexity of the lives of real people.
- Gives us tools to deal more effectively, efficiently, and with complexity with the inequalities that occur in our environment.
- Helps us to recognise the range of realities and needs of the citizens in our municipality.
- Alerts us to how biases and exclusions are also generated based on public policies, depending on factors such as the definition of the people targeted by a given policy or its participation mechanisms.” (2019, p. 6).

Based on the practice of local cultural facilities, these reflections warn of the risk both of addressing a general public and of defining generic audiences according to isolated sociodemographic characteristics (‘the immigrant population’ or ‘people with functional diversity’, for example). They lead to adopting a more complex and sensitive view of the diversity in the environment and raise awareness that the facilities

themselves can also—in the way they define their relationships with the people and communities around them and how these individuals interact within them—reinforce or weaken inequalities and discriminations (Stevenson, 2019). Likewise, we can see a useful resource in the intersectional perspective that, beyond critical reflection, can contribute to improving the practices of facilities, as we mentioned previously, in areas such as equitable inclusion, work with communities, and enrichment of the cultural and civic activities conducted in said buildings, especially from the perspective of diversity.

The same guide recalled that the American jurist and philosopher Kimberlé Crenshaw, who in 1989 coined the concept of intersectionality, differentiates two aspects of this term thus: ‘structural intersectionality’, which explains how the intersection of axes of inequality distributes power between social groups, and ‘political intersectionality,’ which demonstrates how intersectional inequalities are reproduced or are fought through political action, both in public institutions and in through activism (Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales, 2019). The analysis of this second aspect from the perspective of the practice of local cultural facilities appears to be most interesting. Thus, it is about critically reviewing one’s own practices, in order to “ask ourselves who are we leaving out, to what extent are we recognising the heterogeneity of groups, or what identities are we helping to reinforce” (ibid, p. 20).

Likewise, it is important to understand that “(...) in practice, all policies have intersectional effects”, even if they do not aim to do so or do not make them explicit, because “they have an impact on a citizenry that is always crossed by all the axes of inequality. The objective would be for policies to be consciously intersectional (assuming inclusions and exclusions and establishing priorities, etc.) and that they aim to combat these inequalities, which occur as a result of crossing axes” (ibid, p. 19). Thus, what does consciously incorporating intersectionality into the practice of a cultural facility entail? The following sections try to delve into this issue.

¹ In addition to providing valid recommendations for other institutions and entities, the Igualdads Conectadas project involved a diagnosis of the incorporation of intersectionality in various services of the Terrassa City Council, as well as training, debate, and accompanying measures to advance both municipal services and civil society entities in this regard.

INTERSECTIONALITY IN CULTURAL LIFE AND CULTURAL POLICIES

Some recent contributions

In recent years, there have been multiple reflections upon the gender dimension in cultural life and the need to incorporate a gender perspective in cultural management practices and cultural policies. It is mainly within this framework that, more recently, some contributions have also appeared that, above all, from institutional and policy design spheres, raise the need to make the gender perspective more complex, incorporating an intersectional perspective into it.

The *Towards Gender Equality in the Cultural and Creative Sectors report*, published in 2021 by a working group comprising of representatives of EU member states, incorporated several references to the need to integrate an intersectional perspective when promoting gender equality in cultural policies, paying special attention to the labour market, professionalisation, and organisations in the cultural sector. On the one hand, it detects forms of intersectional discrimination specific to cultural spheres, such as those suffered by actresses of advanced age or actresses of colour when trying to obtain roles in theatre, television, or cinema, resulting from the existence of stereotypes and racism that limit the professional opportunities of these groups.

On the other hand, and regarding the recommendations, the report raises several points. Firstly, the need to incorporate intersectionality into the fight against sexual harassment, sexism, and gender violence, given that the combination of different forms of discrimination means that some people may be more vulnerable than others. Secondly, the advisability of collecting disaggregated data based on different variables in order to better analyse situations of multiple discrimination and address them. Thirdly, the importance of incorporating an intersectional perspective when trying to guarantee equality in the programming of cultural activities. Finally, the need

to implement all the recommendations included in the report with an intersectional perspective in order to “identify people with multiple marginalisations, who face the most systematic barriers” (WTO Working Group of Member States’ Experts, 2021, p. 117; authors’ translation).

It is also significant that the conclusions of the report suggested that the intersectional dimension of cultural policies should be addressed in a subsequent publication in order to analyse in more detail the discrimination suffered by racialised people, those with functional diversity, or with certain gender identities.

In addition, a report on culture and gender prepared in parallel by representatives of civil society entities at the European level also remarked that “debates around gender balance and equality must be analysed through the perspective of intersectionality, as an analytical record sufficiently adequate to fully understand the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination affecting women” (Christensen-Redzepovic, 2020, p. 74; authors’ translation).

At the local level, it is interesting to note that the Cultural Rights Plan approved by the Barcelona City Council in 2021 plans to deploy a measure related to the promotion of a “feminist culture: the right to a diverse and equitable culture” in the near future, which aims to advance the right to equal participation and diverse representation of cultural identities from a feminist perspective, applying the gender perspective in all areas of the city’s cultural policies. Within this framework, it also plans to apply the intersectional perspective “to take into account other axes of inequality (class, origin, race, etc.), in addition to gender” (Barcelona City Council, 2021, p. 34). The proposed lines of action, that would have to be specified in a subsequent government measure, included that of broadening the indicators of cultural uses and public management with a gender perspective, training municipal and public cultural facility personnel, incorporating the gender perspective into the educational activities of municipal cultural programmes and facilities, and

giving impetus and support to the story with a feminist perspective, among other things, by giving visibility to intersectionality. One of the ways these proposals should have an impact is on the activities of local cultural facilities such as civic centres—both those directly managed by the municipal administration and those whose management is outsourced to companies or non-profit entities.

Fitting intersectionality into some discourses in politics and local cultural management

Beyond the incorporation of intersectionality into cultural policies for gender equality, which, as we have seen, has been the predominant perspective in recent years, what does an intersectional perspective contribute to the conceptualisation and practice of local cultural facilities?

In the first place, we can relate the comprehensive fight against discrimination that intersectionality provides, with the commitment to the equality of all people and their ability to exercise human rights, including the right to participate in cultural life, which is the typical purpose of public initiatives. In this sense, civic centres and other local cultural facilities (libraries, for example) are committed to being accessible, inclusive, and non-discriminatory spaces that must ensure they can accommodate all people. In this sense, it should be remembered that the commitment to cultural rights also entails analysis and awareness of the obstacles that may exist for certain people to access and participate in cultural life (CGLU, 2015).

Beyond the factors that have traditionally been identified as obstacles to participation in cultural life and access to public facilities (the price of activities, distance to them, physical accessibility, lack of information, lack of cultural habits, or absence of companions with whom to participate in an activity, for example), the intersectional perspective can help us make a more detailed and complex analysis of this reality to identify the underlying causes and define actions to reverse them. Thus, it is about complementing the growing commitment to gender equality or non-discrimination based on

origin— already assumed in many institutional and operational practices—with a broader understanding of the commitment to equality through a holistic analysis of the set of factors that generate inequalities and that can hinder the exercise of rights (UNESCO, 2014). An intersectional gaze can facilitate what the philosopher Remedios Zafra has described as awareness of the multiple fragilities that exist and recognition of shared vulnerability as the basis for a renewed social bond (de Montfort, 2021).

As the Autonomous University of Barcelona researchers Nicolás Barbieri and Yunailis Salazar have stated, working towards equality implies going beyond the segregated recognition of diversity to promote spaces and moments for sharing differences. This requires simultaneously overcoming the tendency to work from a place of homogeneity and to “carry out specific interventions based on the different needs, with the aim of reducing inequalities in the exercise of cultural rights” (2019, p. 97–98). In other words, we must be able to interpret the complexity of the environment and vectors of difference and inequality that affect it and, from there, deploy interventions that combine diversified attention with the generation of meeting spaces and—in accordance with the postulates of these cultural rights—recognise the capacity of each person to be able to determine what personal characteristics define them.

Thus, the intersectional perspective can and should be linked to an ambitious interpretation of cultural rights and their implications for local cultural policies and management. In this sense, and given that, as several of the aforementioned references have shown (UCLG, 2015; Barbieri and Salazar, 2019; Barcelona City Council, 2021), cultural rights already have a relative corpus in terms of their practical application, a scenario is drawn in which intersectionality could be incorporated into already existing discourses, transforming and enriching them according to their own logic.

In the same way, there may be a fit between the intersectional perspective and another of the vital

discourses related to the conception of local cultural policies and management in recent decades—the recognition of and attention to diversity. In this sense, some of the contributions that have claimed the incorporation of intersectionality into cultural management practices have done so from an affirmation of their commitment to diversity (La Diversa, 2018).

The Ciudades Interculturales (Intercultural Cities) programme, is an initiative of the Council of Europe that seeks to promote incorporation of an intercultural perspective into the set of public policies applied by cities on the continent. It recognises intersectionality as an emerging approach required to strengthen the objectives of the programme in terms of equality, diversity, and citizen interaction. Thus, it states that “the challenge for the future debate and practice of intercultural integration is how to develop a more explicit and clear narrative about the relationship between the management of cultural diversity and inclusion, and guarantee equality throughout the range of diversities” (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 23; authors’ translation).

It could be considered that some of the approaches traditionally promoted by this programme, which have mainly addressed the diversity derived from migratory processes and their interaction in urban environments, could constitute a basis for developing intersectional models for addressing diversity and urban inequalities. Ciudades Interculturales has had an impact, for example, on the creation of inclusive public spaces, which favour interaction between people of diverse origins and their participation in the co-creation and co-management of policies. The programme also promotes intercultural skills for the general population and in particular, for people responsible for defining and managing public programmes and the fight against myths and stereotypes in relation to immigrants (through, among others, so-called anti-rumour networks).

In this sense, the incorporation of intersectionality in local cultural facilities could translate into similar

practices. These would seek to incorporate as diverse a range of voices as possible when defining and managing the activities carried out—thereby reviewing governance models. They would also promote narratives linked to the overlapping axes of inequality and discrimination, especially trying to highlight the most hidden realities and combating the stereotypes that surround them.

Thus, it can be observed how some of the current discourses regarding gender equality, cultural rights, or diversity come together with the added value of intersectionality helping us to approach these objectives. This verification can serve to show that some points of the intersectional perspective fit with approaches that are already visible in certain practices of local cultural policies and management. However, we must not forget that we are facing a paradigm that entails a critical and in-depth review of the ways of doing things, both in terms of the internal structuring of organisations and public services, as well as in terms of the design and management of these programmes. In this sense, the following section will analyse some of the main challenges we can imagine will emerge during this process.

CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE MEASURES

Despite the interest that the intersectional perspective generates in some areas (and its potential to contribute to more solid action in relation to the fight against discrimination, cultural rights, and diversity), incorporating it into practice is not an easy process. This section analyses some of the most visible challenges in this regard, ranging from the more general and conceptual to the more specific and operational. This initial identification is important in order to subsequently be able to define work priorities.

A different way of relating to citizens

“Intersectionality is a challenge because it proposes a perspective that questions two common dynamics in public policies: addressing the ‘citizens in general’

or specific social groups that share the same axis of inequality” (Coll-Planas and Solà Morales, 2019, p. 5). By verifying the limitations of these models, which, by simplifying reality, “generate biases and exclusions” (ibidem), intersectionality aims to offer a more complex response, a fact that also requires us to transform the perspective of public services towards citizens. In a certain way, it requires combining a specialised perspective (understanding the specific problems of the young population, but also of women, people of colour, etc.) and another holistic or interrelated viewpoint that is aware that no sectoral perspective is enough; rather, different areas of knowledge and institutional approaches must be combined (Gall, 2014)—a fact that opposes the logic of specialisation upon which administrations are normally organised.

From the perspective of local cultural facilities, this means going beyond both proposals designed for the general public, which will inevitably leave many people out. This is because existing inequalities and discrimination in the social sphere will make some people feel less challenged or that they have insufficient resources, of any kind, to participate. This also applies to programmes aimed at specific groups (youth, the elderly, people with functional diversity, etc.), if their internal diversity is not simultaneously considered or integrated transversally into the design and implementation of projects and in the governance and management of centres.

Another challenge that may arise from this is resistance to change, including the perception that, by committing to intersectionality, the progress previously achieved in dealing with certain situations and dimensions of diversity may be lost (Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales, 2019). Given this idea, it could be advisable to offer a progressive transition towards intersectionality that builds on already existing initiatives in terms of diversity of gender or origin, wherever they already exist. It would also be useful to understand intersectionality as an added value, rather than being just a paradigm shift. The theoretical approaches to the issue highlight

the differences with respect to the current models. However, in practice, it may be useful to start from the already existing structures and understand this transition more as a new step on the path towards equality and the fight against discrimination, rather than a break with it.

El riesgo de desatención de las vulnerabilidades en el contexto post-COVID

(...) [The] evidence indicates that periods of recession or austerity affect women disproportionately. For example, in the United Kingdom, after the 2008 financial crisis, the consequent cutbacks in television caused 5,000 women to leave the industry, compared to 300 men. An urgent concern at this time is that the COVID-19 pandemic will lead to a new and long period of social and financial crisis that will result in similar consequences. (...) Moments of crisis can increase the vulnerability of already marginalised groups (...) (Conor, 2021, p. 20).

These observations—which were extracted from a report recently published by UNESCO—relate to the gender dimension and, more generally, the risk that public attention to the most vulnerable groups will recede in the post-crisis context. In addition, there have also been similar alerts in other settings regarding the situation of people with functional diversity and the risk of suffering setbacks in the resources and attention devoted to their access to cultural activities (see, for example, Miller, 2020).

In this sense, the incorporation of an intersectional perspective requires understanding that institutional responses to the crisis must address the set of existing inequalities and discriminations, rather than providing generic responses that address social, economic, and cultural needs from a standardised perspective. In other words, the fact that the current situation requires responses to more demands from more people should not mean that the responses are the same for everyone, thereby neglecting both the full range of cases and different degrees of need that currently exist.

Initiatives such as the Plan de Derechos Culturales de Barcelona (Barcelona Cultural Rights Plan) are already moving in this direction insofar as they include a gender perspective, other reflections on diversity and inequalities, and the commitment to work from an intersectional point of view. However, it will be important to transfer this same reflection to cultural facilities and provide them with the corresponding resources.

The need to adapt responses to contexts

As we have already explained, intersectionality requires the adoption of an analytical sensitivity that must be adapted to specific realities in a contextual or *situated* exercise. It offers some general guidelines but does not give closed answers, rather it asks institutions and entities responsible for interventions to determine the appropriate procedures to translate these guidelines into practice. Thus, it is, in a way, a *flexible toolbox*, pushing us to stay open to new possibilities.

From the perspective of cultural management, this implies increasing the ability to interpret the context and dialogue with citizens. It requires especially malleable programmes that dedicate time and resources to diagnosis and the incorporation of participatory elements. It also calls for special attention to be paid to the nature of processes relating to the environment, providing critical reflections that allow for the detection of discriminatory elements embedded in the practice itself. This will be in terms of the communication channels used (who is left out if we use digital tools, for example, or the implications of using one language or another), in the spaces and times in which activities are implemented, and in the formats and types of activities offered (workshops, debates, screenings, shows, etc.), etc. Inevitably, acquiring this sensitivity and critical capacity should also imply the implementation of adequate personnel training processes to address, among other things, the less visible forms of inequality and discrimination and the way in which the different axes of discrimination overlap, which combine to generate situations that are difficult to detect.

An aspect related to this, and also one that is difficult to resolve, involves addressing what the feminist activist and doctor in Geography María Rodó-Zárate has called the “relationality between sites” (2021, p. 68). This concept implies understanding that intersectional dynamics and discriminations are determined both by the place in which they occur (public spaces, home, school, cultural centres, etc.), which generates specific problems, as well as by relationships between the production, reproduction, and power of other sites, which also influence the dynamics of discrimination.

Thus, a cultural facility is simultaneously a space where certain relationships of equality or inequality are established and an environment affected by the dynamics of equality and inequality present in the neighbourhood, municipality, country, and globally. As the same author explains, “you cannot understand the precarious situation of domestic workers in Barcelona if you do not understand the situation in the transnational field, the global care chains (...), or the specific situation in, for example, Bolivia” (ibidem, p. 68–69). The same could be said in terms of understanding the dynamics of cultural participation in cities if issues such as patterns of education, socialisation, and access to cultural institutions in the countries of origin of the population residing there are not addressed.

Indeed, the complexity of these reflections can lead to paralysis (Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales, 2019). However, once again, it seems more useful to understand the incorporation of intersectionality as a learning process. It also seems helpful to promote greater dialogue between services and a diverse range of facilities (educational, health, economic, social, and cultural, among others), in order to develop more multifaceted perspectives when interpreting the context and influencing it. From the point of view of local cultural facilities, another necessary measure is promotion of the work of mediation, that is to say, interventions that can facilitate the connection between the centre and its surroundings and favour access to and participation in it.

Not assimilating people with problems

“Situations or social groups that are not the problem are often problematised and strategies are built that imply blaming the victim: ‘Is being a migrant a problem or is the problem the immigration law and the fortress of Europe?’ For example, in the case of young people who have committed an offence, not only is their behaviour determined to be a problem, but it is assigned to the person with the problem” (Coll-Planas, Solà-Morales, and García-Romeral, 2021, p. 20).

Intersectionality means recognising the overlapping of several dimensions in a person’s identity so that none of them becomes the only defining element or only one that can generate inequality or discrimination. This also implies understanding that no group defined according to gender, origin, belief, or class is homogeneous given that each of the people who are part of it also has many other characteristics at the same time. The multiplicity of circumstances that emerge, and the critical look at reality and the ways in which power and oppression can generate situations of inequality and discrimination, means that social problems must be analysed through overlapping perspectives, and should avoid simplifying them based on unique analysis criteria.

In this sense, the appeal that Coll-Planas, Solà-Morales, and García-Romeral make to not assimilate people with problems means that, for example, we must address the structural aspects that can hinder access or participation in cultural activities. This might be a lack of time or economic resources resulting from socioeconomic contexts, distance from institutional spaces (which may be a product of the nature of the education and socialisation processes and image transmitted by facilities), and communication channels used, etc. It could also refer to the way in which the activities on offer in these facilities has traditionally been configured, in other words, what dimensions of diversity are represented in them and how this contributes to generating certain imaginaries and hiding certain axes or dimensions of social life, etc.

This approach implies strongly emphasising the ways the centre relates to and addresses certain problems or themes (cultural rights or diversity, for example). It also requires devoting less attention at the beginning to defining audiences based on their external characteristics. However, it should not be understood as a call to pay less attention to people. Quite the contrary: addressing problems such as those mentioned above should imply a dialogue with those affected, in a broad sense (i.e., audiences, in-house and contracted personnel, collaborating entities, and other agents in the environment, etc.), that allow individual experiences to be recognised in a pluralistic way. Thus, it seems convenient to move towards models of active listening and participation within cultural facilities, which, in addition to serving to enrich the definition of the activities and the mission, conception, and governance of the centres, can also contribute to the processes of personal learning, favouring a better understanding of the different aspects related to discrimination and intersectionality.

Lack of data

(...) [A] significant number of personal characteristics that are included in the different human rights regulations applicable to the Spanish State as specially protected categories against discrimination, are not collected in any case as data related to the personal characteristics of those who we live in the Spanish territory (...) (Castilla, 2020, p. 11; authors’ translation).

In this recent report, legal expert Karlos Castilla warned that, because statistical data on people’s race, beliefs, or ethnic origin are never collected in Spain, it is difficult for administrations to develop intersectional approaches in an adequate and exhaustive manner. The analysis, based on a survey of numerous public services, points out that the absence of this data is officially justified to avoid discriminatory situations, a fact that, according to the author, is equivalent to “[recognising] expressly (...) racism, homophobia, xenophobia, and religious, political, and ideological intolerance embedded in public institutions and, without a doubt, also within

large sectors of society” in the Spanish State (*ibid.*, p. 14–15; authors’ translation), a fact that contrasts with the recommendations of the EU and with the models in force in other European countries.

These reflections refer to data processing by the public administration as a whole in that they do not necessarily imply that it is desirable for cultural facilities to manage data on their users broken down according to multiple dimensions. Thus, both for legal reasons and because of operational capacity, and eventual usefulness, it seems impractical to propose it in these terms. In any case, improving the availability and use of data is an important issue from the perspective of local cultural management which, among other things, should make it possible to better identify and understand the obstacles to participation in cultural life encountered by certain segments of the population, and to help develop policies and programmes that address these issues (UCLG, 2015).

The approach to inequalities, in fact, has been a central issue in different methodological approaches to cultural participation promoted in recent years (Domènech and Partal, 2020; Barcelona Institute of Culture, 2020). In this sense, and remembering that cultural facilities manage data related, among others, to the gender or age of the people enrolled in their activities, different significant questions do arise in relation to the availability of data and its use: How can we determine whether a facility offers equal access to people with diverse characteristics? How, if at all, can we evaluate the improvements made in promoting equality and combating discrimination? Would data collection need to be improved to recognise more diversity (more options in terms of gender identity, for example) and to cover more variables within the framework allowed by law? Do we have the necessary resources and capacities to manage and exploit existing data? Are there viable mechanisms for sharing data with other public services?

Having analysed the motivations and challenges for the incorporation of an intersectional perspective,

the following section will formulate some proposals for moving forward in practice in this area.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR INTERSECTIONAL WORK IN LOCAL CULTURAL FACILITIES

As we pointed out at the beginning of this article, we aimed to make an initial contribution to a process of reflection and learning that should be continued and, above all, enriched on the basis of the specific practices of each facility. Based on the reflections of the previous sections, this last segment suggests some priority areas that should be advanced in terms of incorporation of the intersectional perspective into local cultural facilities. These proposals should be interpreted in the light of the aforementioned idea that mainstreaming intersectionality should be a progressive learning process, which, wherever possible, should draw on existing initiatives and knowledge in areas such as gender or diversity of backgrounds. It is also evident that the specific degree and speed of development of these proposals will be conditioned by aspects such as political priorities, given that in a large number of cases these facilities are publicly owned, and the financial, human, and technical resources are already available.

Given the need to critically reflect upon these facilities, their environment, and how they interrelate, the first essential step is to diagnose the context in order to, among other things, assess whether factors such as the diversity of the staff working in them and their practices may contribute to reinforcing patterns of discrimination, as different studies have previously pointed out (Jancovich, 2017; O’Brien, 2019). We must also address existing experiences in the promotion of equality and fight against discrimination (in terms of the access and development of audiences and programming of activities, etc.), analyse user-related data (who participates and who does not, etc.), recognise the most significant elements of inequality and discrimination in the centre’s area of influence, address the facility’s main areas of work (programming, hosting entities and activities, and communication,

etc.), identify possible collaborations, and formulate proposals for improvement. It seems appropriate that this diagnosis be participatory and involve different figures directly or indirectly related to the life of the facility (staff, users, administrative managers, collaborating people or entities or residents, and surrounding centres, etc.). In this sense, Coll-Planas and Solà-Morales (2019) raised several questions related to the diagnosis of public institutions which can be transferred, duly adapted, to the characteristics of cultural facilities.

Secondly, we will need to provide training measures that combine an understanding of intersectionality, in conceptual terms, with the contribution of specific tools and exchange of experiences with other facilities and services that work in relation to intersectionality and the axes that affect it. It may be particularly appropriate to hold continuous training sessions with agents in the area around the facility in order to encourage a shared recognition of the challenges, an exchange of experiences, and definition of joint proposals. Issues that should be addressed include detecting and addressing low profile forms of discrimination and developing diversity sensitivity skills.

The need to approach the facility as an element that can alternatively reinforce or contribute to combating discrimination, and the interpretation of intersectionality as a learning process that will require periodic review, means that a third area of impact must be the mechanisms for consultation, participation, and governance of the facility. Thus, as mentioned in the initial diagnosis, it would be advisable to make multi-stakeholder participation a transversal element of how the centre is interpreted. It is good to remember that this participation must be accompanied by adequate transparency mechanisms and guarantees that the consultation processes will lead to some type of result, to the extent that it is pertinent in each case. As the cultural researcher Sergio Ramos Cebrián (2021) has stated, the true incorporation of proximity and cultural rights must entail a review of organisational models.

It will also be important to incorporate entities or representatives of groups that can contribute several voices into these processes, while avoiding interpreting them as sole spokespersons for the areas they represent, given their internal diversity. Understanding participation as a transversal element entails proposing the use of participatory mechanisms at different levels (regarding general aspects of the centre, its projects, or specific areas, etc.), and that both the composition of these participatory entities as well as their practices (aspects such as ensuring that meeting times or locations do not hinder the participation of certain people, for example) can be reviewed periodically to ensure sufficient diversity and dynamism.

A fourth area of impact will be the facility's programming. Here, taking an intersectional approach should imply, on the one hand, an effort towards diversity in the programming of activities—which is sensitive to the plurality of realities and forms of identification present in the environment. On the other hand, it also seems appropriate to understand these facilities as meeting spaces, which allow different people to recognise each other in their plurality and to be able to dialogue and participate together with others in processes of learning, creation, and production. The presence of content related to diversity and the fight against discrimination should also be reinforced with the facility's educational offer, as an expression of its commitment in this regard, and with the understanding that the intersectional approach must go much further.

Overall, this intersectional approach in programming can mean that, rather than favouring programmes that focus on one-off exhibitions and that facilitate less participation by the public, continuous activities with a process-type character (workshops, courses, development of creative projects, hosting of entities, etc.) are promoted. In any case, both in terms of the dimensions of diversity that will be displayed in the programming and the formats of the activities, it may be appropriate to seek a complementary balance with the proposals made in other facilities in the same

territory (other civic centres in the same district, for example) that can specialise in different and complementary fields. The resources and structure of individual facilities can make it difficult for them to meet all the needs of their environment, but centres can foster inclusion if they show that they understand the needs of the community surrounding them and establish collaborations with other similar facilities.

To favour the ability of facilities to understand their purpose as a meeting space, the fifth key area of intervention implies the importance of mediation channels with their environment and collaborations with other entities. In this sense, as we have already explained, the need to interpret the context in a complex way, have the capacity to detect forms of inequality and discrimination that are not immediately visible, and to advance towards more accessible and inclusive facilities, means that it is advisable to increase the resources allocated both to work outside the facility (to detect cases and attract audiences) and to collaborate with educational,

social, health, and other agents who can provide new perspectives.

Finally, as also explained above, it is important to address the availability and management of data and, more generally, favour evaluation processes and continuous learning by different centres. As far as possible, the collection of data disaggregated into dimensions that are meaningful and feasible (gender, age, nationality, etc.) is desirable. This will be especially necessary to guarantee that the existing data is used in practice to favour the facility's learning, detect deficiencies regarding the inclusion of diverse backgrounds, and to promote equality and define new activities that contribute to this process.

On the basis of these contributions, we hope that this current paper adds to this necessary and enriching process and serves to strengthen the role of local cultural facilities as spaces to promote participation in cultural life and contribute to a more diverse and plural society committed to the fight against discrimination.

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