

Leadership and the making of inclusion

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Stream outline: Despite their long histories of modernization, European societies still show robust discriminatory systems with multiple exclusionary mechanisms. Modern organizations play an important role for the generation of institutional and cultural forms of discrimination as they reproduce rules and procedures that exclude cultural minorities and non-hegemonic groups. In addition, organizational agents perform (intentional or non-intentional) discrimination, e.g., as gate-keepers attributing sexist, racist categories or other (Burns 2008).

Politics of inclusion generally aim at the reduction of exclusionary mechanisms or practices and their effects. While on societal level, social inclusion targets at the social and political recognition of individuality and equal chances to participate in society, modern organizations' answers for inclusion vary considerably. Concepts of diversity management may be oriented towards formal antidiscrimination goals or the strategic use of human resources hitherto unexploited. In recent years, however, diversity management has come to embrace the idea of social inclusion in a much more comprehensive sense. The goal is to change organizational culture through organizational learning, encouraging reflexivity, creating space for multi-cultural experience or mixed-teams, etc. From an analytical point of view, this development requires a change of theoretical and methodological perspective, too. For once, change agency can no more be reduced to managers and leaders alone. It rather needs to be viewed as dispersed across various levels and contexts of organization. Furthermore, the role of leadership and its relation to change needs to be readdressed. While leadership still deserves analytical focus, a contextualized view on inclusion is required accounting for the relationality and situatedness of politics and practices of inclusion. The "making of inclusion", in fact, needs to be regarded as a collective effort by various change agents, including leaders, in a situated context. In terms of methodology, a multi-level analysis needs to be applied, allowing for investigations upon identity politics and the negotiations of values on micro-level, while moving on to the meso-level of organizational culture as well as to macro influences in terms of top management decisions and societal discourses of equality and inclusion, etc.

Our stream on leadership and making of inclusion grounds on an interdisciplinary and cross-level approach to address cultural, institutional, interactional and personal mechanisms of change agency. Therefore, we want to invite both theoretical and empirical contributions to increase our understanding on what makes organizations more inclusive.

Stream questions:

- How to conceive the process of “the making of inclusion”? Which notions/social theories of inclusion are apt to highlight the dynamics, contradictions, as well as tensions in “the making of inclusion”?
- What is the role of leadership in the making of inclusion? Is leadership necessary in order to produce inclusion? Can leadership be an obstacle to inclusion? How can leaders be supported?
- How is inclusion fabricated – beyond, without or despite of leadership? More generally speaking, what are the social conditions of leadership and change agency towards inclusion?
- How to recognize the challenges of social learning and value the contribution of change agency in everyday-organizational life? What are the reactions to and consequences of change towards inclusion?

Keywords:

Inclusion, diversity management, leadership, change agency, contextualization

Publication plans:

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of our proposed stream we envisage a special issue in a sociological or managerial outlet that supports multi-layered perspectives on the conceptualization of inclusion and its link to change agency like *Work, Employment and Society* or the *International Journal of Diversity*. The least requirement is to work on two to three papers with at least two authors each, who will have presented conceptual and empirical papers within the stream, to focus on specific aspects from different perspectives (e.g. sociological and psychological perspectives on the role of change agents and leadership or psychological and management perspectives on diversity managers as change agents of inclusion).