**Stream title**:

*The new territories of gender equality: corporate boards, feminine networks and pro-women employees resource groups*

**Maria Giuseppina Bruna**

Scientific Director, Chair “Towards an Inclusive Company”, IPAG Business School – France

Director, Research program "Women & networks" (led by the Chair IPAG “Towards an Inclusive Company, the Foundation “Egalité Mixité” and the Foundation "Acting Against Exclusion").

**Rey Dang**

ICN Business School – CEREFIGE (University of Lorraine), Nancy-Metz

**Stream outline**:

The stream manages to investigate the new challenges and the news (virtual and physical) territories to promote women’s inclusion at work, focusing on two complementary issues: the women on corporate boards topics (WOCB) and the feminine and/or pro-women networks.

For several years now, the issue of women on corporate boards (WOCB) has been a focal point of political debate and academic research (Terjesen, et al., 2009). Previously considered as an ethical imperative for equal opportunities and a social issue (on the basis that is wrong to exclude individuals on the sole grounds of gender, skin color, sexual orientation, etc. regardless of their ability, WOCB is increasingly perceived as a vector of value creation for organizations. Robinson and Dechant (1997) argue that workforce diversity creates a competitive edge for an organization inducing a “business case”.

A growing body of research shows that a broad set of business benefits is associated with WOCB. These include improved financial performance and shareholder value (e.g., Campbell and Mínguez-Vera, 2008), increased customer and employee satisfaction (e.g. Daily, et al., 1999), rising investor confidence, and greater market knowledge and reputation (e.g., Bear, et al., 2010).

However, many hot topics remain in many countries nowadays (not exhaustive list) (cf. Hillman, 2015):

* How to promote the number of WOCB;
* The dynamics create by female directors inside these corporate bodies are important to be examined (Nielsen and Huse, 2010);
* Is there really a business case for board diversity? (Post and Byron, 2015);
* WOCB and CSR (Post and Byron, 2015);
* Role and place of women on Executive Committee;
* Etc.

We encourage submissions coming from different points of view, such as theoretical perspectives, countries/cultures, processes, dynamics and consequences of the representation of WOCB. These are to be understood from the individual, organizational or societal level, or with a multi-level approach and/or cross-cultural view (Terjesen, et al., 2009). We are interested in understanding the mechanisms of WOCB from a multidisciplinary point of view, combining theoretical and methodological perspectives (qualitative or quantitative approaches).

Nevertheless, the feminization of Corporate Boards is neither the best indicator/descriptor nor the best signal of the effectiveness of a firm’s CSR commitment /gender diversity policy (influence of institutional dynamics, legal constraints and phenomena of normative and mimetic isomorphism; firm’s strategy design and decision making escaping, in facts, boards’ perimeter of action…).

Thus, we encourage the submission of papers addressing the deployment at work of feminine networks, pro diversity networks and pro-women employees resource groups as well as high-level talent pools and future leaders training ponds (future members of Executive Boards / Corporate Managers…) , laboratories of agility and inclusion (post-modern management), incubators of innovation and key-levers of gender equality at work.

Consequently, the papers could investigate the strategic challenges pushing firms to create, support, “consacrate” (or, *a minima,* does not block or brake) intra-organisational women’s networks (legitimation tool), and specularly, the key-reasons urging (and encouraging) women to create, postulare, join, support and/or lead feminine or pro-gender diversity clubs (personal development opportunity; advocacy tool; collective action instrument…).

The submission could explore, complementarly, the arbitrages (risks/opportunities) inherent to the creation (maintain or disruption), support (or boycott) and developpement (or curbing) of women networks (for the entreprises) and the ethical dilemmas inherent to the membership/affiliation/implication of women (n these affinity/advocacy femine networks (this investigation could be particualrly stimulating for feminine managers and decision-makers).

In addition, we encourage papers describing women networks’ morphology, decrypting their socio-organisational mechanims and their operational tools as well as empirical envidences on the evolution of networks’ morphology, perimeter, functionning, identity and identification dynamics (diachronical perspective).

The impacts of women networks (feminine affinity networks, pro-women employee resource groups, pro- gender diversity advocacy networks…) on team creativity and organisational learning stimulation, as well as on managerial, technical and technological innovation and, finally, global performance (organisationa, social and/or economic as well) shoud be empirically explored.

The feminine or pro-women netwoks could be looked as spaces of gender diversity and women’s professional developpement, networking, mentoring, coaching and empowerment, spaces of mutual caring at work, levers of information sharing and knowledge developpement as well as laboratories of creativity, prospective thought and business.

Finally, the feminine or pro-women netwoks shoud be investigated as supporting, substituing, palliative instruments to achieve gender equality at work (femininisation of executive commitees, managerial commitees, future leaders pools and finally Corporate Boards…).

The Stream addresses the critical issues of gender diversity and inclusion in organizations, promoting and adopting an opened, interdisciplinary, international and trans-methodological approach. It hosts innovative papers without any methodological restriction (qualitative, quantitative approach, theoretical approach, mixed-methods are accepted) that could enrich the state of knowledge and enlighten managerial practices.

In addition, the *Stream* would include papers focusing on ::

* + Complementarities, rivalries or parallelisms in advocacy missions among pro-diversity networks (gender-based, LGBT, aging, cultural, philosophical/political or ethnical oriented networks…)
  + Differences and proximities among *advocacy networks* and *affinity networks* (advocacy as an affinity, affinity as a cause to advocate or affinity as opened way to advocate more universal / holistic causes)
  + the singularities, redundancies and synergies among sponsoring, mentoring, leadership, peer networks, virtual and physical pro-gender diversity networks, and business-oriented and sharing-knowledge-grounded communities of practices…
  + the employees’ groups, women’s networks and pro-diversity communities as laboratories of inclusion, organizational agility and innovation.

**References**

Bear, S., Rahman, N. and Post, C. (2010). The impact of board diversity and gender composition on corporate social responsibility and firm reputation. Journal of Business Ethics, *97*, 207-221.

Bruna, M. G. (2016).Des acteurs, des règles et des savoirs : régulation sociale et apprentissage collectif dans une politique *diversité*,Management & Avenir, *86*, 163-192.

Bruna, M.G. (2013). Du bon usage des réseaux sociaux en entreprise : le cas de figure des cadres-femmes aux Etats-Unis, Management International/International Management, *17(4)*, 14-33, 2013.

Bruna, M.G. and Chauvet, M. (2014). Des femmes et des réseaux : *mentoring* et réseaux affinitaires au service de l’égalité, special issue « *Peut-on faire l’économie du genre ?* », *Regards croisés sur l’économie*, 2014, 165-182.

Bruna, M.G. and Chanlat, J.-F. (2015). Conducting a Diversity Policy as an Organizational Change Process: A Theoretical Model going from Organizational Legitimation to Institutionalization Dynamics. EURAM Conference 2015, Varsovie, 17-20 June 2015, 30 p.

Bell, M. P., Özbilgin, M. F., Beauregard, T. A., & Sürgevil, O. (2011). Voice, silence, and diversity in 21st century organizations: Strategies for inclusion of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender employees. *Human Resource Management*, *50*(1), 131-146.

Bierema, L. L. (2005). Women's networks: a career development intervention or impediment?. *Human Resource Development International*, *8*(2), 207-224.

Campbell, K. and Mínguez-Vera, A. (2008). Gender diversity in the boardroom and firm financial performance. Journal of Business Ethics, *83*, 435-451.

Daily, C. M., Certo, S. T. and Dalton, D. R. (1999). A decade of corporate women: Some progress in the boardroom, none in the executive suite. Strategic Management Journal, *20*, 93-99.

Githens, R. P. (2009). Capitalism, identity politics, and queerness converge: LGBT employee resource groups. *New Horizons in Adult Education & Human Resource Development*, *23*(3), 18.

Githens, R. P., & Aragon, S. R. (2009). LGBT employee groups: Goals and organizational structures.*Advances in Developing Human Resources*, *11*(1), 121-135.

Hillman, A. J. (2015). Board diversity: Beginning to unpeel the onion. Corporate Governance: An International Review, *23*, 104-107.

Ibarra, H. (1993). Personal networks of women and minorities in management: A conceptual framework. *Academy of management Review*, *18*(1), 56-87.

Kravitz, D. A. (2008). The diversity–validity dilemma: Beyond selection-the role of affirmative action. *Personnel Psychology*, *61*(1), 173-193.

Lieber, L. D. (2012). Considerations for attracting and retaining a qualified, diverse workforce.*Employment Relations Today*, *38*(4), 85-92.

Özbilgin, M. and Tatli, A. (2008). Global Diversity Management: An Evidence Based Approach, London/New York: Palgrave.

Özbilgin, M. et Tatli, A. (2011), Mapping out the field of equality and diversity: Rise of individualism and voluntarism, *Human* Relations, *64(9),* 1229-1253.

Nielsen, S. and Huse, M. (2010). The contribution of women on boards of directors: Going beyond the surface. Corporate Governance: An International Review, *18,* 136-148.

Nishii L. H. and Özbilgin M. F. (2007). Global diversity management: towards a conceptual framework, *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *18(11)*, 1883-1894.

Post, C. and Byron, K. (2015). Women on boards and firm financial performance: A meta-analysis. Academy of Management Journal, *58*, 1546-1571.

Robinson, G. and Dechant, K. (1997). Building a Business Case for Diversity. Academy of Management Executive, *11*, 21-31.

Rolf, S. J., Schlachter, S. D., & Welbourne, T. M. (2016). Leading Sustainable Global Change from Within: The Case of Environmental Employee Resource Groups. *Employment Relations Today*, *43*(2), 17-23.

Tatli, A. and Özbilgin, M. (2009). Understanding Diversity Managers’ Role in Organizational Change: Towards a Conceptual Framework. *Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences*, *26(3)*, 244-258.

Tatli, A. and Özbilgin, M. (2012). **An Emic Approach to Intersectional Study of Diversity at Work: a Bourdieuan Framing. International** Journal of Management Reviews, *14(2),* 180-200.

Terjesen, S., Sealy, R. and Singh, V. (2009). Women directors on corporate boards: A review and research agenda. Corporate Governance: An International Review, *17*, 320-337.

Welbourne, T. M., & McLaughlin, L. L. (2013). Making the business case for employee resource groups. *Employment Relations Today*, *40*(2), 35-44.

Welbourne, T. M., Rolf, S., & Schlachter, S. (2015). Employee Resource Groups: An Introduction, Review and Research Agenda. In *Academy of Management Proceedings*, Academy of Management,  *2015(1),* 15661.