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Stream 7

(In-)Equality Mainstreaming?

Unraveling Adversion, Ruptures and Conceptual Shiftings in the Politics of Nondiscrimination and Diversity from Comparative Perspectives in (and beyond) Europe

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The celebration of “cultural diversity” and promotion of non-discrimination are parallel primary agendas of the European Union and the United Nations. The principles of equal treatment and protection against discriminatory treatment are anchored in the founding documents of the European Union, where the role of political and organizational actors are defined (for ex. Article 167 of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union). Besides, the Union has adopted and piled up on a number of Directives on the level of International Law (such as the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive, among others), to which Nation States must adhere, in order to reach out to and intervene in specific fields of governance, such as health, education, work. Analytic observations of non-discrimination-unfolding in the European Union context indicate that, in the transfer of related agendas to domestic affairs and domains, top-down hierarchies prevail over the institutionalization of bottom-up approaches. Yet, institutional discrimination theory (cf. Gomolla/Radtke 2002) emphasizes the need for a shift of viewpoint from formal to empirical and material levels - hence, to the experience-based domain of structural inequality - in order to enable states and societies to take responsibility for their enforcement.

Similar findings are indicated by pioneer studies on diversity in the EU: In particular, they shed light on the peculiarity of the translation of reforms and agendas into organizational and domestic law and argue that there is a high likeliness that they turn into a crucial entry point for (possible) particular experiences of marginalization. The superordinate argument is that organizational routines and instruments for inclusion do not automatically comply with laws and universal justice principles, nor are they immune to the influence of culturally and locally long-established reductionist or essentialist contingents of plurality in society (cf. Wrench 2007). In a nutshell, diversity should be regarded as conceptual container, integrating a number of claims and demands in the pursuit of social justice, but at the same time leaving a great deal

of conceptual leeway to the actors and stakeholders advocating their implementation. Besides, some scholars have noted great efficacy of institutional and structural forms of discrimination (“institutional bias”, cf. Henry 2010), which cannot be traced back to individual prejudice, but result from interactions of ‘equal’ and ‘unequal’ institutionalized routines, actions and rules. Others point to the large fallacy of the conceptual disregard of intersections of discrimination experiences and risks (Hill Collins/Bilge 2016), demanding for additional diagnostic effort to be put in organizational development. Lastly, inclusion-theorists draw attention to multi-dimensional, causal-original mechanisms of reproduction of social inequalities in societies and institutions (Nkomo 2013).

Taking into account these valid concerns, the stream scope focuses on the examination of vacancies in present provisions as well as research desiderata in the field of sustainable and reflexive non-discrimination policy development.

While both non-discrimination and diversity-promotions can be seen as concrete political agendas to disseminate the universal principle of social justice, inclusion scholars note that their analysis requires studies that reflect the individual context and conditions of their implementation. As institutional theory has pointed out, both conceptual ambivalences and rigid, discrimination-prohibiting regulation may lead to higher abstractedness of their concrete aim and actually increase the likeliness of institutional ‘decoupling’ (Meyer/Rowan 1977, cf. also March/Olsen 2009). In times when the policy influences on equality and diversity are increasingly transnational, the power of incentives fostering the promotion and communication of non-discrimination as a means to ensure social justice should be re-visited in respect to the individual presuppositions of their cultural embedding. While the translation of transnational reform incentives into state law (McCrudden/Prechal 2009; Bell 2008; McColgan et al. 2006) and the reporting on discrimination experience in general (European Commission 2015; 2014; FRA 2017) have been subject to comparative examinations, studies on the transformative impact of policies on subjective and organizational level is rare. So are approaches on the dynamics and constellations of reciprocity by which diversity- and non-discrimination-principles work.

Hence, an overall goal of the panel is to encourage dialogue between legal, local and organizational approaches and to work on questions as how to assess the trajectory of their application in concrete fields and contexts in regard to local-cultural particularities.

Moreover, the discussions of methodological strategies to broaden the current qualitative research toolsets are welcome. Questions related to this endeavour might be: How is diversity ‘channelled’ through concrete catalogues of characteristics/points of reference (such as religion, gender, etc.) to signal a need for protection? Which legitimation strategies are brought up to relate diversity agendas and non-discrimination? Further, there is room for discussion of conceptual inconsistencies and idiosyncratic rationalities evaporating from non-discrimination and diversity-assuring legal provisions through institutional- or profession-comparative lenses (cf. Benschop 2001).

All contributions are welcome that elucidate the ambivalences and contradictions resulting from nuanced wordings and formulations, which may have a deep, critical relation with particular

social groups. Beyond that, papers could be organized around, but are not limited to the following topical complexes:

- National/local particularities in non-discrimination legislation and reports/comments on their organizational implementation
- Im/-Explicit mediation, ‘trading’ and connecting of different principles of justice (such as recognition and redistribution) or other philosophical reflections on normative backdrops and conceptualizations of social justice
- Conceptual and theoretical presuppositions of “diversity” and “non-discrimination”-action principles and rationalities and their entanglements
- Studies focusing the relation and interrelations of legal, organizational and subjective dimensions of (non-)discrimination under the viewpoint of sustainable transformation
- Evaluations of the state of cultural embeddedness of non-discrimination-agendas and possible effects of revision/collision/confusion of their interpretation of specific concepts and wording (e.g. gender/sex, race/ethnic background) in transnational policy-making
- Strategies and tools to identify demands for tightening or ascertaining of policy requirements on diversity promotion
- Evaluative studies on implementation of non-discrimination legislation and diversity policies in particular organizational environments in regard to performance/performativity and institutional work
- Case- or field-specific models and ‘organizational flows’ of reflection and evaluation of non-discrimination and diversity-agendas

Submissions to the conference (i.e. to the streams) can be in the form of long abstracts (up to 1500 words), developmental papers (3000-5000 words, including references) or full papers (no length restrictions) by the deadline of 1 March 2021. Please process your registration and paper submission online via www.edi-conference.org.

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