

**Gender, Work & Organization
11th Biennial International Interdisciplinary Conference
24th to 26th June 2020
Transforming Contexts, Transforming Selves: Gender in New Times
University of Kent, Canterbury, UK**

Call for abstracts

Stream No. 32: Women on boards and in senior leadership: Exploring change strategies within international contexts

Deadline for the Submission of Abstracts is Friday 1st November 2019

Stream convenors:

Elena Doldor, Queen Mary University of London, ENGLAND

Cathrine Seierstad, University of Southern Norway (USN), NORWAY

Heike Mensi-Klarbach, University of Vienna, AUSTRIA

Alison Sheridan, University of New England, AUSTRALIA

Women remain underrepresented on boards and in senior leadership positions, despite an increased focus from academics, practitioners and policymakers (Terjesen and Sealy, 2016; CIPD, 2015; Kirsch, 2018) and the introduction of an array of national level initiatives ranging from quotas (e.g. in Norway, Spain, Iceland, France, Italy, Germany) to more voluntaristic approaches (e.g. UK and Australia). Global political pressure at national and supranational levels (e.g. EU) and public condemnation of this persistent gender gap in senior leadership have resulted in a transnational change movement towards more gender balanced boards (Seierstad, Gabaldon and Mensi-Klarbach, 2017). Yet, there is much debate around the unresolved question of which policies or initiatives are most likely to transform the corporate context, create broader social, cultural and political changes and achieve the goal of gender equality in senior leadership ranks.

Scholarship in the field reflects an increased interest in examining and theorizing how the landscape of boards can be transformed. Moving beyond a descriptive focus on the characteristics of female versus male directors (e.g. Singh, Terjesen and Vinnicombe, 2008), or the contested link between board gender composition and organizational outcomes (e.g.

Post and Byron, 2016), recent work in the field seeks to grapple with how change on boards and in senior management can be advocated for and implemented through public policy initiatives such as quotas or voluntary targets (De Vos and Culliford, 2014; Seierstad and Opsahl 2011; Wang and Kelan 2013; Teigen, 2012; Kirsch, 2018). For instance, several studies mapped out macro-level national and institutional conditions shaping WoB public policies, particularly more radical change strategies such as quotas (Grosvold and Brammer, 2011; Iannotta, Gatti, and Huse, 2016; Teigen, 2012; Terjesen et al., 2015; Seierstad et al., 2017; Rouault, 2017). Other studies have examined the actors, processes, and controversies involved in shaping and implementing voluntary and mandatory WoB policies (Seierstad et al., 2017; Doldor et al., 2016; Sealy et al., 2017; Sealy and Terjesen, 2017; Sheridan, Ross-Smith and Lord, 2014). Recently, calls have been made for a shift of focus from studies focusing on board diversity and the narrowly defined corporate outcomes towards wider equality and diversity impact of board level initiatives (e.g. quotas and targets) on societies, organisations and individual directors (Hughes et al., 2016; Kirsch, 2018; Terjesen and Sealy, 2016).

Considering the mounting practical and scholarly interest in changing the landscape of boards and senior management, our stream seeks to explore the following key themes:

- **International insights into change strategies and stakeholders.** What can we learn from various countries that have pursued mandatory or voluntary change strategies for boards and senior leadership? What arguments are being used to make the case for change and frame the debate? Who are key actors driving the debate? What role, if any, do more peripheral actors have? We welcome papers from any national context, and cross-country studies.
- **Pipeline and progression processes.** What are women's leadership progression experiences? How do their career trajectories differ from those of men? How can organizations create inclusive working cultures that enable women to progress at higher rates? What organizational measures are radical in terms of fostering gender balance on boards and/or in senior executive roles? How do changes in board or management diversity impact norms of 'good' leadership?
- **Boardroom and executive dynamics.** How does increased gender balance on boards and senior management change the behavioural dynamics in senior teams? How can we discuss these changes due to increased gender diversity without essentialising gender differences? We welcome empirical, but also conceptual papers in this regard.

- **Equality reach of quotas/targets.** Building more gender balance in senior leadership through initiatives such as quotas and targets remains of contemporary significance; yet, the wider equality implications of these initiatives, beyond the board level, has largely been neglected. Do quotas/ targets lead to wider equality beyond the board/ senior managerial level? What are the 'trickle down' mechanisms? Do mandatory versus voluntary initiatives impact wider equality differently? Does gender diversity on boards mean equality in the sense of equal power and thus, can power differences among men and women be reduced in gender diverse boards?

- **Quota design variations.** While multiple countries have introduced quotas, these vary tremendously in targets set, scope of companies affected, enforcement mechanisms and evaluation mechanisms. We call for more systematic knowledge beyond the narrow distinctions between quotas and targets to capture similarities and differences of quota laws. Similarly, we welcome studies exploring voluntary gender targets.

- **Intersectionality.** Intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989; Acker, 2006) is an important lens in equality and management research, allowing scholars to explore how gender overlaps with other forms of exclusion in the workplace. However, women on boards research has largely neglected this important area. How do current theories and policies address intersectionality on boards and in senior management? How does increased gender diversity impact other aspects of diversity on boards, such as age, ethnicity, social class? We welcome studies with an intersectional focus.

This list of topics is suggestive rather than exhaustive. Contributors may draw on material from a wide range of empirical spheres, theoretical perspectives and methodological orientations. Papers can be theoretical or theoretically-informed empirical work.

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (ONE page, Word document NOT PDF, single spaced, excluding references, no header, footers or track changes) are invited by **Friday 1 November 2019**, with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream leaders within one month. All abstracts will be peer reviewed. New and young scholars with 'work in progress' papers are welcomed. In the case of co-authored papers, ONE person should be identified as the corresponding author. Due to restrictions of space, multiple submissions by the same author will not be timetabled. Abstracts should be emailed to: e.r.doldor@qmul.ac.uk and should include **FULL** contact details, including your name, department, institutional affiliation, mailing address, and e-mail address. *State the title of the stream to which you are submitting your abstract.*

Elena Doldor is an Associate Professor in Organizational Behaviour at Queen Mary University of London, where she is a member of the Centre for Research in Equality and Diversity. Her expertise is in gender and leadership, women on boards, and the processes influencing women's progression to leadership roles. Elena's work has been published in several edited books, practitioner reports and academic journals such as *The Leadership Quarterly*, *Human Resource Management Journal*, *British Journal of Management* and *International Journal of Management Reviews*.

Cathrine Seierstad is an Associate Professor in Leadership at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN). Her research interests fall largely within the fields of leadership, equality, diversity and inclusion at work, women on boards, corporate governance and CSR. Her current research examines the wider equality effects of using gender quotas on corporate boards in a variety of countries. Cathrine's work is published in journals such as: *Journal of Business Ethics*; *Corporate Governance: An International Review*; *Work Employment and Society*; *Gender, Work and Organization*, and *Scandinavian Journal of Management*.

Alison Sheridan is a Professor of Management, UNE Business School at the University of New England. She has been teaching and researching women's experiences of paid work, including their representation on boards, for more than two decades. Her research often focuses on the regional context and her work has appeared in *Gender Work and Organization*, *Gender and Education*, *Corporate Governance: An International Review*, *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* and *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. She is an Associate Editor for *Gender Work & Organization*. She has held a number of board roles, is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (GAICD), a Life Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Management (FANZAM) and a Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy (PFHEA). She is currently Division Chair of the Gender and Diversity in Organizations (GDO) Division, Academy of Management.

Heike Mensi-Klarbach is currently Assistant Professor at the Institute for Gender and Diversity in Organizations at WU Vienna. She obtained her doctorate in 2009 as a fellow of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. In 2015 she joined the Copenhagen Business School as a visiting scholar. From 2015 to 2017 she was Visiting Professor for Gender and Diversity at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of Leibniz University Hannover. Her research interests cover the inclusion of people with disabilities in the work context as well as gender in organizations and in management. She has edited several books, including *Gender Diversity in the Boardroom*, volumes 1 & 2, and published her research in various academic journals.