ATHENS EDI 2013 CONFERENCE

**Stream title**: Gender, power and organizations

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**Stream outline:**

Women should represent 40% of large public listed companies Corporate Boards members in the near future in several European countries (Spain, Netherlands, France…), following the example of Norway. Other countries should also, on a more volunteer basis, endeavor to reach similar parity. In this context, an interesting corpus of research is emerging (Terjesen, Sealy and Singh 2009), answering such questions as: Who are these feminine board members, do they “differ” in any way – education, age, background etc… - from their male counterparts? Is there anything happening in boards’ functioning following their presence? etc…

Beyond the sheer numeric representation of women and its potential effects, boards’ feminization paves the way for ”shaking” the Glass Ceiling on women’ careers (Davidson and Burke 2011). If experienced women are needed in boards, firms should start to really enable their access to corporate top positions in order for them to build adequate business expertise.

This not only challenges the gendering of careers and professions but also raises the question of the “sex” of power. Since Organizations are gendered (Angelof and Laufer 2007), and in most cases meta-consciously ruled by masculine norms and expectations, how will or should women behave in order to successfully and legitimately hold corporate power positions? Research has shown that they sometimes have to play different registers than men in order to gain legitimacy, including with females subordinates (Wajcman, 1998). This should lead us to take a fresh look on “women in leadership”, focusing not so much on hypothetical differences between men and women relating to power, but also, in a more relational analysis, on the (un)successful ways through which women negotiate this power with their environments (professional as well as private). How do women negotiate this within the family? Do partners more or less begin to change attitudes and roles to help their wives?

The gendered dimension of power relationships impacts men’ organizational and career experiences as well. They are expected, to say it rapidly, to confirm to norms of virility in many circumstances (Collinson and Hearn 1996). Given the emerging dynamics of diversity and gender equality, do such norms tend to evolve in organizations? Is it contingent on sectors or professions? Any inquiry into masculine experiences or strategies in organizations is appreciated.

If women are denied (or less easily granted with) authoritative/formal power, they may nonetheless come to their ends in organizations and use similar resources as their male colleagues. In this respect, research studying the role of Women’s Professional Networks is welcome, as well as research on mentoring in or across organizations (Pigeyre, 2001).

What has been written so far about “women” also applies to “women from discriminated / minority groups”. They may face stronger obstacles regarding access to power - or not, depending on what is emphasized in the contexts and which resources and rules they are able to draw on.

To sum up, possible themes in this stream include:

- Women and corporate boards: profiles and rationale, emergent effects;

- Women’s access to managerial and professional top positions: are careers (or sectors or fields) becoming less gendered, with which (intended or not) consequences? How do women mobilize Women Professional Networks and Mentoring, within or across organizations?

- Is power still gendered in organizations or can we observe more balanced relations? Do diversity management policies bring any evolution in this respect?

- Do women have to exert power in a different way than men to be legitimate in leadership positions? Is this contingent on the professional sector (predominantly feminine or masculine jobs) or on the organizational culture (“feminine”, “masculine”, cf public vs private sector – Pringle and Olsson 2004)?

- How do men experience the “gendered organization” and the possible dynamic of gender power relations in organizations?

- What can be said about the experiences of minority women in their access to power? Which resources and rules can they draw on?

- What are the different strategies to overcome the “scarcity” of women in top jobs and power positions: diversity policies, legal actions concerning sex discrimination,, legal and political constraints such as quotas ,a more active role of women networks…?

**Dates for submission :** (in conformity with EDI conference rules)

**Key words**: gender, feminization of corporate boards, masculine domination, gendered organization, women’s careers, gender equality, leadership

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