

## [Theorizing and Practizing Organizational Culture and Diversity] A Case Study<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* Modern organizations seem to have relative autonomy; what happens in organizations can be explained by looking at the changing balances of power, and the wider social figurations. Especially when it comes to processes of reorganization the increase in project- and target-oriented work often comes with diversity management. Using the process sociological perspective and the theory of subjectification through increasing self-organization, this paper refers to Norbert Elias' work on social inequalities. This perspective will be applied to organizations, diversity and gender in order to investigate further aspects of new conditions of re-organization, subjectification and the shift towards flatter forms of organizational structure, conditions of gendering teamwork, the consequences for the cooperation of mixed teams, and the ways in which changes in the self-images and social make-up of employees go hand in hand with changes in the social structure of gender and employee relations more generally.

*Keywords:* Organizational sociology, Gender and diversity, Teamwork, Reorganization, Process theory, Established and outsiders.

### Introduction

I think it is the mixture of the team that makes its success.  
We have younger and older colleagues: Overall a balanced mixture.  
(Division manager)

The increasing significance of outcome-oriented project and teamwork, the flattening of hierarchies that comes with reorganization, and efforts to change the demographic composition of the workforce (Powell 2011) have promoted the dissemination of this innovative form of organizing work. It implicates a higher level of autonomy and extends the scope of self-organization as much as it promises an increase in efficiency. Project-oriented teamwork requires specific structures of communication and performance, on the one hand, and efforts of subjectification on part of the participating workers, on the other. Though often praised, empirical and theoretical research on the incidence of teamwork, on team performance, team formation and team diversity is still in its infancy (Kirton, Greene 2005; Rastetter 2006; Russo 2012; Holgate 2012). Furthermore, the question of equal opportunities in organizations and the organization of work remains in this context. There is a continuing debate on whether an open or "learning" organizational culture via leading teams and managing self-organized work offers more opportunities – especially for women. Focusing on gender in general, one has to recognize that while an abundance of affirmative action strategies have been introduced in the business world, women are still underrepresented in top management. Therefore, there is still «the widespread perceived need to link equality objectives to broader business and organizational objectives» (Kirton, Greene 2005: 4). Our knowledge about diversity is largely due to studies on work groups. In order to further explore processes of organizational change,

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it is important to consider the effects that a change in the gender composition of a group might have: «Researchers often ignore the interdependence of sex and other dimensions of diversity» (Powell 2011: 7). The first hypothesis here is that an increasing proportion of women in an organization does not necessarily change organizational culture. Secondly, it seems that additional supporting measures are necessary for an organization to adopt an innovative approach and further gender and diversity equity.

Moreover, the strategic alignment of organization policies is currently in a phase of transformation from a focus on ensuring equal treatment of difference (standard employment relationship) to encouraging an unequal treatment of difference to enhance diversity (development of diverse potentials, “diversity management”). The third hypothesis derives from the process-oriented, figurational (Baur, Ernst 2011) and diversity-critical approach (Swan 2010; Gatrell, Swan 2008) proposed here: different kinds of inter- and intra-organizational networks as well as formal or informal groups can support, but also undermine, innovations such as diversity management and gender equality. A top-down or bottom-up reorganization of teams can influence their acceptance and effectiveness.

Especially in the process of organizational decentration and the shift towards flexible, flatter forms of organizational structure and labor management techniques, strong or weak ties and structural holes (embedded in a special kind of organizational culture) are also relevant and determine agenda-setting processes. Furthermore, introducing flat hierarchies demands increased self-control, self-organization and responsibility, i.e. subjectivity. Gendering the workplace therefore also means introducing a new degree of sensitivity and organizational reflection. I want to analyze whether under these new conditions of re-organization “traditional” structures of power and authority disappear or whether they are effectively hidden by the rhetoric of self-managed teams. At first sight, it would seem that team working opens the door to traditional structures of domination. A closer look at the implications of team working on gender power balances shows ambivalence: traditional and new ideals of managing difference and overcoming discriminating behavior are competing. This new ideal entails an interesting interplay between different figurational dynamics, different organizational levels, and different prospects for gender-based power relations, subjectification and power chances. In order to find new levels of synthesis, the following paper wants to integrate two separate discussions: the often naïve and normative management discourse on reorganization, gender and diversity, on the one hand, and the discourse of increased subjectification and governance in industrial sociology, i.e. labor studies, on the other (Newton 1999, 2004).

In the organizational context, fourthly, workforce diversity is another interesting point, as a naïve hope and the illusion of rationalization go hand in hand with the belief that a heterogeneous group is superior to a homogeneous one. However, research tends to look into the effects of diversity rather than the efficient management of diversity within teams or the theoretical impacts of diversity and organizational culture (Rastetter 2006: 87; Mutjaba 2007; Iglehart 2009; Holgate 2012; Russo 2012). The presented case study, embedded in a theoretical framework of a process-oriented social theory, analyses the social construction of inequalities (Kirton and Greene 2005) in a company that operates in what by tradition is stereotyped as a female sector. I will reflect on the changes that the former discourse about social, i.e. gender, differences has undergone on its way to becoming a general discourse on diversity.

Firstly, the organizational and sociological context of the project will be described before I explore the importance of diversity management. Furthermore, for conceptual reasons, I will review the discourse on gender, group and team research. Finally, the article provides an outline of the empirical study, the main research questions and the current findings, which attempt to answer the question of increased subjectification and control.

### *Organizations and inequality*

One major inequality in organizations is gender inequality. In many Western and non-Western countries, women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in the economy, politics and academia (Gallup Poll). Women have been moving steadily into occupations, professions and managerial jobs previously reserved for men. Despite high qualifications, they have more difficulties in successfully pursuing a career than their male counterparts do. Although women continuously manage to advance into higher positions in the professional

world, the characteristic processes of selection by gender have not ceased to exist. The glass ceiling in gendered organizations (Moss Kanter 1977; Witz, Savage 1992; Acker 2006, 1996; Kirton, Gill 2005, 5), both at the vertical and the horizontal level of organizational hierarchy, still hinders women from advancing to the level of strategic management (Schäfer, Tucci, Gottschall 2012). Their hegemonic (alpha) male (Connell, Messerschmidt 2005: 840) counterparts still dominate this level by 95%. In the economy as well as the academic world, men still occupy the central decision-making and status positions, which come with the power to delegate, direct and decide. Furthermore, male professionals have a higher degree of organization and cohesion as they have a long history of being part of the professions (Ernst 2003; Alemann 2007).

It does not suffice to meet these challenges with innovative leadership and new ways of organizing work, such as teamwork, alone; it also requires a new generation to take over leadership in a new organizational culture. Nowadays, not only basic requirements, such as expertise and methodological competence, are essential to the profitability of a company. The so-called soft skills (social and individual competence; team, communication and cooperation skills; decision-making, analytical and problem-solving skills; creativity and innovativeness) are also needed. This fact points to an increasing subjectification in the work process (Ernst 2010; Tractenberg, Streumer, van Zolingen 2002; Voswinkel, Kontos 2010). The aforementioned skills, amongst others, are trained by working in groups and teams, from which future male and female managers are recruited. Mutjaba (2007: 241) states that 90 % of all companies have at present (now) introduced forms of self-organized teamwork. On this organizational level women do not access team leadership in the same way as men do.

Statistics from German academia (CEWS 2007) show that while formally the rate of highly qualified women is rising, this is not mirrored adequately in employment. Although the proportion of women in management positions has been growing continuously for years, at 15.4% it is still at a very low level (Wirth 2001; 2009). Thus, the female pool of talent is not nearly exhausted. Even from a macro-economic point of view, this means that masses of highly qualified "human capital" lie idle. Consequently, there is still a considerable gender asymmetry in strategic management posts and team leading positions in the Western economy as in science and research. This striking disparity and gender trouble shows how female high potentials are systematically disappointed, as women's expectations are not met. Potentially frustrating decisions are made without giving reasons. The key findings of gender research in this context demonstrate the *gendering* of organizations and professions (Witz and Savage 1992; Acker 1990) and the *horizontal segregation* of the labor market.

On top of this, organizations feature vertical segregation with *glass ceilings* and *glass walls*, which inhibit women from moving into leadership positions (Powell 2011; Wirth 2001, 2009). Horizontal segregation causes vertical segregation as well: women find themselves in positions detrimental to their careers. They work in gender-typical sectors or are not taken seriously. Therefore, women are less frequently hired for leadership positions because of stereotypical expectations and perceptions. Requirements in middle and higher management have moved towards a diversity sensitive leadership style that is equally masculine and feminine, forcing cooperation to integrate both. Strategic management, however, is still male dominated, and exclusion mechanisms to the detriment of women remain in place. Therefore, one of the most important requests to support women on their way into leadership positions is to establish diversity and to bring more women into team leading positions (Rastetter 2006: 99). Current demographic changes, the need for high potentials as well as women's changed orientation towards career and lifestyle, however, speak against such a process of continuous gendering (Kirton, Greene 2005: 4; Lorber 2000). On the one hand, on average women today have higher levels of education and better professional qualifications than previous generations. In Germany, for instance, the number of women in employment has risen to 70 % accordingly (SOFI 2005, 23-24; Allmendinger 2010: 16). On the other hand, there are still differences in salary, and women are under-represented at the management level. These empirical findings show that gender differentiation in organizations is still *neither* obsolete *nor* are organizations gendered in a continuous structural process. Research questions concerning the gendering and mixing of teams that need to be addressed are:

1. Do groups and teams as micro-political units reproduce gender inequality?
2. If so, to what extent do they do so?
3. Does some proportional representation of men and women offer new options for equal opportunity and diversity management beyond ontological complementarities?

4. Is there any indication of a de-gendering of organizational culture or is diversity policy replacing equality policies?
5. How is the interwoven process of subjectification and identification connected with this?

*Governing diversity management, power and organizational culture*

So far, miscellaneous tools of organizational development and equalization have been adopted in order to interrupt the vicious circle of permanently reproducing gendering and discrimination. In addition to Gender Mainstreaming, the advancement of women and equal opportunity policies, *Diversity Management* (DiM) has recently become another favorite tool. Its ambition is to break up the traditional homogeneity of organizations through diversity. Unlike the other previously mentioned tools, gender is only one aspect among others in this context, and *managing diversity* is still controversial. Diversity management is a broader, Western concept while women's empowerment projects, by contrast, adopt a different perspective on gender difference and equality, especially in non-Western countries. Diversity management seamlessly ties in with the findings of the *human relations approach* (Roethlisberger, Dickson 1939) and the way these findings have been transferred to company settings (the theory of human capital). This concept takes up the advantages and disadvantages of staff diversity in organizations and work groups with the goal of exploiting the benefits of heterogeneity. The growing popularity of DiM results from demographic changes, legal obligations, globalization and targeted marketing as well as the increase in service provision within and between companies (Koall, Bruchhagen, Höher 2007; Özbilgin 2009). Diversity management runs the risk to «essentialize difference, obscuring the social production of difference and the unequal power relation which create hierarchies of difference» (Swan 2010: 80). Unlike gender equality policy, diversity management is not based on the normative idea of equality but on the acceptance of difference and inequality in principle. There is even more that needs to be considered, especially against the background of suggestions that «diversity is a [completely] new way forward for business organizations» (Kirton and Greene 2005: 3; Powell 2011). Particularly in the European Union and the UK there are only few studies that rightly mark the social, cultural and economic differences between the EU and the USA where DiM originates from (Kirton, Green 2005; Swan 2010; Powell 2011).

The ongoing, application-oriented discussion of diversity in organizations still lacks sufficient theoretical and conceptual underpinning (Kirton, Greene 2005; Powell 2011). It considers as much alleged risks as it does opportunities. To have a *variety* of skills, competences, beliefs and ideals may be an advantage if one is looking for a creative and innovative way of problem-solving or if changing requirements ask for a flexible reaction. However, variety is also discussed as a burden. For instance, when it comes to quickly reaching joint decisions or when the absence of affective ties between members of an organization has a negative influence on the climate within the organization (Rastetter 2006; Lederle 2008; Powell 2011). Other risks of social heterogeneity are the possibly increasing fluctuations in work groups or the deterioration of social relationships. Another important and ambivalent aspect with regard to an often too narrow understanding of variety is the fact that a high level of homogeneity in established (male-dominated) groups may cause personnel turnover of female high potentials.

Diversity implies an increase in complexity and calls for ambitious and reflective management. Here, the term *management* as such carries the promise of rationalization and success. In this vein, Kirton and Greene (2005) state that 'without doubt the diversity approach has a certain appeal, but it is also accused of «upbeat naivety [...] because of the way it de-emphasizes the conflicts, problems and dilemmas involved in implementing meaningful diversity policy» (Kirton, Greene 2005: 3). Moreover, Swan in the wider DiM context observes a «diversity capitalism», which capitalizes on the rise of racial identity politics and in so doing [...] commodifies politics in order to sell goods» (Swan 2010: 84).

Many gender and diversity projects seem to adopt and take for granted the underlying rational and individualistic concept of organizations. In so doing, they underestimate the specific figurational order of organizations (Elias, Scotson 2010; Ernst 2010). Russo (2012), for example, recently tried to develop principles for team performance and goal orientation using multiple regression analysis based on 24 interviews with auditors and consultants. It still remains an open question how the increased complexity that comes with variety could be reduced in order

to consider not only diverse groups but homogeneous ones as well. Qualitative case studies inspired by process-oriented theory could be expected to deliver more insights in this respect too (Powell 2011).

The discourse on DiM refers back to a «holistic cultural ontology» (Lederle 2008: 202), which contributes rather to hypostatizing gender relations than to stimulating them. It is noticeable that HR looks mainly at successful “branding”, rationalization, the economic value of being different from competitors, and optimal exploitation of human capital and working capacity. The issue is not (group-)equality or anti-discrimination but rather to «institutionalize an infrastructure to better cope with the transformation problems of “other” employees» (Lederle 2008: 255). As a special kind of effective surveillance technology’ and mimicry, diversity management is mostly implemented without even verifying whether it actually yields returns in terms of rationality and efficiency (Lederle 2008: 176, 227 ff.). Kirton and Greene (2005: 5) suggest to «develop policy to redress discrimination and disadvantage».

As there «is no theory of diversity» (Rastetter 2006: 94), diversity management concentrates on gender and still causes disturbance in organizations that implicitly foster homogeneity, while they appear to be gender-neutral and rationally constructed. Although such organizations are usually figure-driven, they suspect that evaluating indicators of diversity is a malicious method to push quotas and bring about organizational change by force (Lederle 2008: 240). In this respect, teams and work groups have a special intermediary position in organizational structures, as they are often found on the operational level and interface with the strategic level via staff units established for this purpose. Organizational sociology’s new look at this specific kind of *gender trouble* not only captures the phenomenon of interaction between the sexes but also the structural organization underlying such interaction in order to find further evidence of strategies of subjectification and power relations.

Furthermore, especially women are assumed being affine to a participative, flexible and non-hierarchical leadership style (Alemann 2007; Gatrell, Swan 2008: 58). They would prefer «decentralized structures that are almost free of hierarchy and without formal leadership (hierarchy of prestige)» (Klingen 2001: 71). In contrast, men are stereotyped to favor the «centralized, rank-oriented structure with formally appointed leadership (hierarchy of dominance)» (*ibid.*). Due to these different stereotypes in work orientations, there is not only the danger of conflict within teams but also of failure.

#### *Teams, gender and diversity*

As mentioned before, teamwork is a new way of executing work that requires special structures of communication and cooperation. Although many organizations favor teamwork, its impacts on gender and diversity have yet to be sufficiently explored in research. The fact that little research has been done in this area so far is even more surprising as teamwork is an important step in careers in leadership positions. Teamwork has also been shown to support equality on the horizontal as well as the vertical level of organizations. Organizations, however, do not change automatically just by increasing the number of female employees demanding more responsibility in exchange for more engagement at work. The interdisciplinary research on work and gender shows how qualified group work, especially in large companies or industrial organizations as well as in the service sector, asks for high flexibility and demands ambiguous subjectification of individuals. So far, this organizational aspect of business operations and its relation to gender issues has not been thoroughly researched in German-speaking countries. Most studies have either involved test groups composed of students or, in the industrial sector, have focused on (partially) autonomous group work. Test groups from the industrial sector, however, are usually homogeneous male teams (Ernst 2010; Lohr, Nickel 2005: 213-14.). For such a discussion to be empirically grounded, we need more empirical research about new areas of working life. Anglo-American research, for example, has produced studies on teamwork in the police, sports, fast food restaurants and multinational corporations (Mujtaba 2007). While such research has provided some first insights, more such studies in «real organizational settings, with participants of teams engaged in real work activities» (Russo 2012: 125; Holgate 2012) are still needed. Since teams usually include team members with multiple group affiliations and team structures reveal existing institutional inequalities while at the same time systematically creating inequalities of their own (Nassehi 2002), it



is obvious that there is a need to compare how teams in various companies operate in order to gain greater insight into double bind and power processes in organizations. The importance of organizational culture with its values of teamwork and status of team members, have not been investigated closely too even though these factors are an important aspect of the success or failure of a diverse team.

The team, as an ongoing, consent-based mode of group work, offers insights into power relations, diversity and heterogeneity. It leaves more room for maneuvering and is more or less a self-defined form of cooperation. The ideal type of team displays self-regulation, strong group cohesion, group charisma and balanced power relations (Elias, Scotson 2010). Moreover, it supports common objectives, strong collaboration and, depending on the organizational context, possibly oftentimes-autonomous powers of decision-making and control (Mutjaba 2007: 240; Russo 2012). Teamwork asks for certain individual abilities and relies on the social skills and personal strengths of its members. The novel shift towards increasing levels of general self-restraint could nonetheless feature a new level of differentiation. The ambiguity between less external constraints and more self-restraint emerges against the background of globalized markets. The conflicting areas of emotion and time management have also reached the formerly more simply organized and less-skilled work spheres (Ernst 2010; Hughes 2005). Therefore, teamwork demands the subjective work performance mentioned earlier. On the one hand, one can identify changing power balances and subjectification in the concept of the *entployee*, or self-employed employee (see below), who is increasingly confronted with the need to enhance self-economization, self-rationality and self-control. Subjectification, as a process category, in this vein implies individual socialisation processes, patterns of orientation and cognition influencing concrete performance. Referring to Elias (1991), who convincingly described the ambivalence of individualisation, I presume an ambiguous kind of self-regulation. This implies not only structural constraints but also explicitly implies new options. Subjectivity as part of an unplanned long-term process is more than the result of localized techniques of inscription. The various forms of subjectification i.e. reclaimed, compensatory, ideological and actively structured forms of subjectification (Lohr and Nickel 2005: 213-14) in working life depend on the figurations of power (see chart below). Whilst compensatory subjectivity appears as a one-sided adaptation of the worker, reclaiming subjectivity is a formerly “deviant” kind of participation and autonomy demanded by “disruptive” and otherwise powerless workers. Moreover, structuring subjectivity means an active and constructive form of engagement at work offering more freedom and self-organization in exchange for more responsibility. The notable aspect here is that what was once disruptive subjectivity now becomes a productive factor. On the other hand, subjectification is manifest in other forms that are of a compensatory and ideological nature:

The “enterprising self” was a new identity for the employee, one that blurred, or even obliterated, the distinction between worker and manager. The “enterprising self” was the active citizen of democracy at work, whether in charge of a particular product division, a large corporation, or a particular set of activities on the shop floor. (...) Individuals had to be governed in light of the imperative that they each conduct their lives as a kind of enterprise of the self, striving to improve the “quality of life” to themselves and their families through the choices that they took within the marketplace of life (Miller and Rose 1995: 254)

Unique and creative solutions, reaching beyond a one-sided, reflexive adjustment to the market, have been the result of the interplay between processes of normative subjectification and individualization in working life. Several studies based on group research make assertions about social skills almost exclusively on grounds of (biological) sex only (Heintel 2006; Powell 2011). A very homogeneous group shows strong cohesion. This again has an impact on the performance of the team. However, strong cohesion does not necessarily lead to better performance. It may have negative effects just as well, for instance, lower individual performance in a team setting due to imbalanced power and to greater pressures of conformity within the group. Conversely, high performance leads to stronger cohesion within the group (Elias, Scotson 2010). It is obvious, however, that these changes relate to patterns of power and interdependence and, in the case of teamwork, especially to balanced diversity and gender sensitive relations of power. Elias’s work is «still rarely referenced within organization studies» (Van Iterson, Mastenbroek, Soeters 2001: 498). In the process of informalization, trends such as «lowered acceptance of power and status differences, abating ceremony in meetings and addressing, increasingly relaxed interaction

between superiors and subordinates, male and female employees, older and younger employees» (Van Iterson, Mastenbroek, Soeters 2001: 507) could be interpreted as an achievement of the modern civilizing process. Elias's approach to changing power balances in the process of civilization and to social inequalities particularly helps to understand the double binds involved in negotiating the power balance between individuals and groups (Newton 1999, 2004). This is especially true with respect to European integration, the question of balancing national gender cultures and European efforts for gender and diversity (Schäfer, Tucci, Gottschall 2012). The Established/Outsiders theory helps us to draw attention to ambivalent developments in gender and organization cultures. The figurational model of established and outsiders relations was developed in order to understand social inequality. It is based on the idea that the social techniques of superiority and subordination depend on power relations. Elias pointed to the interdependence of "praise-gossip" towards one's self and "rejecting gossip" towards the outsiders. The position of the group members depends on the duration of residence and of belonging to the group. Elias and Scotson claimed that in this socially *equal* class formation the rejecting gossip and praise gossip are internalised by the group members in a long-term process. The established *feel* superior, more qualified and good about themselves while the outsiders have lower self-confidence.

Concerning subordinates in companies, «more teamwork and more intra- and inter-organizational linkages» (Van Iterson, Mastenbroek, Soeters 2001: 507) imply intensified subjectification and identification with work. Even more if one has to compensate discrimination. Disadvantages arise as well: apart from the traditional patterns of work where time management is dictated by product cycles in globalized markets, i.e. marketability, employees have to be completely available as operations demand.

Due to the problematic ambivalence in the structures of organizations mentioned above, women usually receive less recognition for professional competence than men. This leads to an internal hierarchy where women can reach the same status only through higher qualification. In mixed-gender teams where women are a minority, the male majority may adopt a defensive approach. Since a team defines itself being a self-regulatory entity and one that should not be structured hierarchically, weaker members of the group have difficulties in resisting the pressure of dominant and gossiping group members for example in case of discrimination. These fluctuating power relations within a group are often not easily recognizable and therefore difficult to research. A further question concerns the opposite constellation where a female majority dominates male team members and how such teams develop compared to homogeneous teams. When one looks at gender aspects, it would be especially interesting to investigate at which point women are not seen as a minority anymore. Determining such a tipping point can be expected to provide possible starting points for breaking the glass ceiling to strategic management positions and changing organizations as a whole.

### *The micro cosmos of gender and diversity*

Although the topic of homogeneous and heterogeneous work groups has attracted more attention in the meantime, concrete studies looking into interaction and social dynamics in *real* mixed-gender groups and especially organizations are still missing (Holgate 2012; Russo 2012; Powell 2011). Organizations rather consider rational aspects when compiling a team than social and group dynamic issues, with the aim of assembling the best possible and most effective formation.

As opposed to academic publications, organizations rarely consider the aspect of diversity in spite of the fact that teamwork is gaining significance and becoming more widespread. There is much talk but little action as far as diversity is concerned (Lederle 2008). The power relations in work groups as well as gender diversity are often discussed in regard to leadership in organizations. Yet except for the classic study by Moss Kanter (1977) and recently Powell (2011), we still lack studies on the performance of mixed-gender teams and how it depends on team composition, or rather on the proportion of women in a team. Team make-up is considered from a more economic and rational point of view while underestimating social and group dynamics like gossiping or discrimination. Especially research on the specific demand for subjectification in various economic sectors and gender-typical fields of work is still at an early stage (Ernst 2010). Meanwhile, it seems to be common sense that mixed-gender teams are more creative and more innovative than homogeneous teams. While a mixed-gender

team increases creative output and team innovativeness, it is not clear to what extent other facets of mixed-gender arrangements counteract this advantage and give reason to prefer homogenous teams instead. For instance, ascriptive differences between group members, such as gender, age or ethnicity, can threaten the formation of group identity and cause conflicts at the emotional level. On the other hand, the very same differences lead to different perspectives and attitudes towards a range of topics, which is one reason why heterogeneous teams can be expected to produce broader and more creative solutions (Mutjaba 2007: 240; Russo 2012: 128). Hence, the specific organizational setting and different intervening variables moderate team performance. Motivation, goal orientation, self-efficacy, participant information, creativity and supportive structures all influence this process. Studying mixed-sex teams, Powell (2011: 10) states that they are «susceptible to a host of problems, the severity of which depends on a number of situational factors».

Thus, the question between stereotypical expectations and selective perception is whether heterogeneity or homogeneity is the more promising means of fully tapping the skills and leadership potential of female high potentials and of supporting them in breaking through to the managerial level. The description of heterogeneity in organizations is only a first step in the academic and practical debate on diversity. Because of the differences in perception and processes of attribution, it is furthermore important to inquire into how variety is handled. To what extent does variety increase the probability of conflicts between members of different social categories? A multifaceted workforce thus offers specific opportunities in some working situations but, in view of certain tasks, may come with certain risks as well. The advantages of heterogeneity, however, can only develop if stereotyping, communication barriers and pressure to conform are minimized through balanced leadership, i.e. if the power relations are more balanced.

#### *Gender and Self at work: the case study*

Our case study ties in with these primary research perspectives. The question who acts in which ways in groups or teams and what informal mechanisms are stimulated in the deeper structures of organizations and groups is of special interest. On the one hand, it must be reassessed whether and, if so, to what extent women learn to cope with the «principles of a male group structure» in a gendered organization and have to adapt to ‘alien power and rank hierarchies» (Klingen 2001: 60). On the other hand, concrete interaction, context and structure also need to be studied. The extent to which gender strategies correlate with team satisfaction must be considered as well. Against the background of interwoven balances of power, factors such as milieu/class, age, gender, sexual orientation, culture and (dis)ability can certainly be expected to intertwine and have to be addressed specifically.

The project focuses especially on the ambivalence of teamwork. The effects and dynamics of micro-political power in team settings and the figuration between established team members and outsiders are a matter of interest, as is the pressure to comply with dominant norms as an expression of power relations. Particularly the question of values and status distribution is relevant. Are organizations that implement teamwork on the way to becoming organizations marked by diversity and/or gender equality? The ongoing research on homogeneous and heterogeneous teams seeks to identify factors that have an impact (input) on effectiveness, determine influential parameters (processes) and provide an exact description of the effectiveness of work groups (output). Therefore, the guide includes questions regarding the implementation, definition, transformation and promotion of teamwork, individual career opportunities, stress, conflicts, motivation, transparency and leadership.

The case study is an insurance company in the health and social insurance sector. Mixed-gender and homogeneous teams are prevalent. The insurer is located in Northern Germany and has 350 employees. In one of its departments, consisting of 76 employees (60 of them women), one can find an interesting and diverse team structure. In 2001, teamwork was introduced into the line structure of the strategic and operational divisions as part of a reorganization process. The teams range from female dominated ones to teams with gender parity, with a maximum of 18 members per team. There are two women-only teams, three mini-teams as well as a team of division managers, which has a human resource development plan of its own. Newly established levels with consultants and assistants have also been introduced in order to support the division managers. The teams work in



open plan offices as well as what they sarcastically refer to as «solitary confinement cells». The project considers the demographics of the organization (size, economic sector, percentage of women, employee backgrounds as well as input, output and process factors). The researchers did not actively bring up gender as a topic in the discussions or interviews, but did consider it in selecting the groups to be studied, as there were male, female and mixed-gender teams. The teams selected consisted of eight to ten persons.

The company perceives itself to be a learning organization and actually can be characterized as quite innovative since it has a Total Quality Management system (TQM), evaluates employee satisfaction and provides individual coaching as well as a wide variety of further education and internal career opportunities. There are, however, different opinions on whether the organization encourages the formation of such teams and what such encouragement should look like. The same is true in matters of leadership. The requirements for teamwork are high, and this places too high demands on many employees at the operational level, which is reflected in the handling of conflicts. Rather than work them out, they are frequently delegated to external consultants, which quite often results in excluding the “troublemaker” from the team processes. The management interprets this differently by explaining that outside coaching helps to communicate more easily and openly.

Another striking observation is the categorical attribution in self-perception and social perception that apparently come with diversity and indicate the existence of, stereotypes, conflicts and a hegemonic hierarchy of dominance. There is, for example, a big discrepancy between the social perception of an academic female team as a “henhouse” and its self-perception as a “female multitasking power team”. Men, in this view, have not been able to meet expectations so far because of having a different attitude towards work and being much more oriented towards facts and results instead of processes.

I think they are only similar by sex, otherwise not at all ... Besides that they all like to work, enjoy their job, but they have completely different personalities: from sensitive to rough around the edges. And, I think it is the mixture of the team that makes its success. We have younger and older colleagues; they are in their twenties, their thirties, their forties and three in their fifties. Overall a balanced mixture. This is important because the younger colleagues benefit a lot from the experience of the older ones. (Division manager, homogeneous women’s team)

More evidence for dominance-oriented expectations at the operational level is found in a conflict between an operational team member and a woman of a higher rank in the organization: the subordinate refuses cooperation with the “Ladies from the Chippie”. In the process of reorganization, a new middle management level has been introduced in order to re-hierarchize work and implement a bonus system. Here, team working opens the door to traditional structures of domination. Power and authority persists in favor of praising self-managed work and teamwork. This is regarded as a new, tricky form of inequality, causing conflicts that have to be accepted, as a male manager stresses. In terms of social inequality, group dynamics and de-gendering organizations, one can observe two interesting aspects:

- Firstly, in the opposite constellation where a female majority dominates male team members, one can recognize that, in the micro-cosmos of this organization, the women’s power team is the newly established group that feels superior, more qualified and better about themselves than men. The men seem to be the current *outsiders* with lower self-confidence. A case in point is a male employee at the operational level who reports an episode of sabotaging team sessions by not speaking for more than half a year.
- Secondly, the emergence of team working in mixed gender teams, i.e. more women’s participation in management change masculine habituses with the consequence that the mutual balance of power between the sexes is moving from «harmonious difference» (Ernst 2003) or «from harmonious inequality towards inharmonious equality» (Liston 2005: 81)
- Thirdly, men and women have little chance to escape gender: «Even if sex is not important to a particular person’s own sense of identity, other people may be influenced by their beliefs and expectations associated with that person’s sex» (Powell 2011: 6)

Concerning efforts of subjectification, there exists an interdependence between the kind and effectiveness of teamwork: teamwork that is implemented bottom-up tends to be more influential whereas teamwork implemented

top-down tends to be less so. Therefore, the process of reorganization and implementation of more gender and diversity equality is interpreted as innovative by the one side and as a burden and imposition by the other. Team members at the operational level tend to work in groups with formal participation and a less elaborated conflict culture, whereas at the strategic and middle-management level diversity is regarded as a win-win situation for the company as a whole. Therefore, teamwork among the rank and file is oriented more towards leadership, using diversity as an opportunity for developing teams, norms and values. By contrast, the strategic levels are oriented more towards good team performance. As a first result, one can link the organizational status of each individual to the following types of subjectivity:

*Teamwork and organizational subjectivity*

Organizational level, function	Kind of work	Type of subjectivity	Illustration
<b>Head of Department North</b>			
<i>Top management, front stage</i>	Teamwork	Mostly compensatory, structuring and reclaiming subjectivity	«It means giving freedom for self-organization and acting responsibly in the organizational network. I need an assistant as a buffer» (team leader, homogeneous women team).
<i>Middle management, assistants</i>	Mostly semi-autonomous teamwork	Compensatory and structuring subjectivity with reclaiming subjectivity	«As a diverse team, we bring together different perspectives as we struggle for compromises.’ And: ‘I recognize that I can’t stop working, therefore I force myself to finish work between 4 and 5 p.m.» (female assistant, heterogeneous team).
<i>Operational level, backstage</i>	Less influential team work	Compensatory subjectivity needed, tendencies of reclaiming subjectivity	«Then I asked myself: ‘What expectations do I have for my career?’ And I discovered that I prefer a ‘nine-to-five job’. That’s it! I don’t want to think about my work in my leisure time» (male administrator, heterogeneous team)

Tapping diversity’s full potential (as an opportunity) to develop teams, norms and values is not really a topic in this company but a latent aspect in its organizational culture. This ambivalence of teamwork and unequal power balances culminates in the discriminatory treatment of a disabled woman at the operational level who has aspirations of making a career: she laments not having been considered for a management post. Her female boss, in turn, characterizes the aspirant as the “weakest member of the team”. This coincides with research results confirming that «disabled people are also over-represented in low-skilled, low-status jobs» (Kirton, Greene 2005: 5).

*Conclusion and outlook*

In the presented paper I analyzed how work is organized in mixed teams and the impact on efficiency and success from a process-oriented perspective. Diversity management as part of modern organization culture is considered a tool to reinforce balanced power relations between the employees and to reduce inequality in social groups while it allows exploiting diverse perspectives and employee skills in the pursuit of organizational objectives.

Organizations, however, do not change automatically just by increasing the number of female employees under the device of diversity management. Therefore, I asked whether under new conditions of re-organization “traditional” structures of power and authority are obsolete or whether they are still alive, but in effect hidden. Trying to clarify the interdependency of group processes, group constellations and goal achievement during the introduction of teamwork I discussed a reorganization project in a company of the health sector, defined as a typical female sector. Interpreting the empirical results in light of the research question, one can observe the process of doing gender in teams, both in mixed and homogenous teams. One can recognize an interesting movement back and forth of praise and blame gossip between established and outsiders in the company. Those who reject teamwork for various reasons and those who advocate the introduction of teamwork in the process of re-organization are members of different organizational divisions. This has to do with the kind of subjectification of work involved in the respective setting too.

The introduction of cooperative-participatory organization structures does not automatically increase gender equality in an organization. Under conditions of top-down reorganization in connection with the flattening of hierarchies one can see, on the one hand, a shift towards more “traditional” structures of power and authority that is effectively hidden by the rhetoric of self-managed and diverse teams. The interdependence of “praise-gossip” towards one’s self and “rejecting gossip” towards the outsiders show the social techniques of superiority and subordination depend on power relations. But, on the other hand, these power relations are developing in an ambivalent way: it seems that the ideal of «harmonious difference» (Ernst 2003) is going to be replaced. Although more women’s access towards management has changed the masculine habitus, this is not evident in the female habitus. It seems as if their habitus stays ambivalent concerning making a “career”. One can observe the construction of binary images: moving to the top assumes to loose or miss something or “being bored” in contrast to “having interesting work instead of quickly reaching the top”. They favor horizontal not vertical access, which confirms Meuser’s (2009) assumption on barriers for women and career. This process together with the patriarchal resistance to female bosses of some men from the subordinated level can be described as a move from harmonious difference or inequality towards «inharmonious equality» (Liston 2005: 81). There exists ambivalence not only towards teamwork but also in matters of dramatizing or ignoring gender (Lorber 2000), i.e. reflecting power relations in the organization. However, the non-simultaneities involved in the dramatizing and de-dramatizing of gender, types of teams and demands for subjectification point to ambivalent change and non-intended effects of social innovation in restructured organizations. The naïve expectation that diversity affects the process and outcome variables cannot be maintained. Whereas from an economic point of view diversity seems to be a successful management strategy, traditional structures of thinking and (non-)cooperation undermine this strategy of equalization in the organizational world. The co-workers often feel overwhelmed by expectations and insufficiently led by superiors; they expect more direction from leadership. At the top of the organization, by contrast, an open conflict culture is valued.

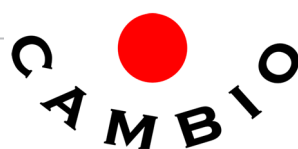
Otherness and organizational diversity cause conflicts or create a negative atmosphere since an open conflict culture and professional leadership are lacking. In some case diversity is not intended; sometimes colleagues have been forced to cooperate or have been in the company too long to now learn teamwork. In some divisions conflicts are waged at the personal level or delegated to outside consultants, which is perceived as a retreat from responsibility and a lack of soft skills in the company. Especially at the operational level, the subordinates expect clear structure and leadership to develop their abilities. Subjectivity at the level of less influential teamwork is a challenge whereas in middle and top management, prototypical self-employees are found who appreciate teamwork as an attractive opportunity to take an active role in shaping and defining their work. The latter create an open conflict culture and perceive such an environment as beneficial to a better team performance. Moreover, women succeeded in coping with stereotyped masculine principles of leadership.

I fully agree with Powell (2011: 6) that future studies should focus on the ambivalence of ongoing change in organizational cultures at the figurational and rational level, i.e. backstage and front stage. The movements between what happens up front and what goes on behind the scenes need to be closely analyzed. Moreover, a monitoring system is needed that will permit the organization to control the efficiency of diversity management, gender equality and open access for all employees. Overall, it is important to recognize inequalities between groups since

social groups involve several dimensions of diversity that are enacted differently in different situations (situational approach). Otherwise innovation processes could be mistaken for a strategy of inventing an endless array of officials for special tasks, which ignores the existence of conflicting interests and power relations, as in a recent case of appointing an official for matters of “employee wellbeing at the workplace”.

Taking into account age and generation, the superordinate question is whether changes through socialization in the orientation towards life, work and career of female and male junior employees can be expected to shape attitudes toward teamwork as well. Will this have consequences for working in teams, for leadership and the “accessibility” of leadership positions?

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