



TRACK2: Gender, Management and Changing Public Sectors

Track Chairs:

Professor Elisabeth Berg,
Luleå University of Technology,
Division of Gender and Technology,
971 87 Luleå, Sweden
E-Mail: elisabeth.berg@ltu.se
Telephone: 0046920491663

Professor Jim Barry,
University of East London,
4-6 University way, London, E16 2RD, UK
E-Mail: j.j.barry@uel.ac.uk
Telephone: 00442082232207

Dr John Chandler,
University of East London,
4-6 University Way, London, E16 2RD, UK
E-Mail: j.p.chandler@uel.ac.uk
Telephone: 00442082232211

Abstract:

Public sector organisations in many parts of the world are likely to face increasing challenges from the fall-out of the recent global fiscal crises that can only add to the difficulties they have already been experiencing since the mid 80s' from the arrival of the new managerial reforms. These reforms have been implemented in many OECD countries (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2004, Hood 1995) although variable take up has seen differential impact, with the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Denmark and Sweden counted as forerunners and countries such as Germany, Japan and Switzerland much less inclined to become involved (Hood 1995). From a gender perspective, public sectors in Europe have a gendered hierarchy where women are in low and mid-level positions and men are in the majority in senior posts (Glover and Kirton 2006, Dent 2003, Berg 2003), with Acker (2006) referring to the existence of 'inequality regimes' as in evidence implicating gender, race and class. With fewer women in higher positions, gender inequality in organizations has become almost predictable, while at the same time an increasing individualism brings a shift of attention away from structured gender inequality towards diversity. The legislation on equal opportunities is also focused on individuals (Glover and

Kirton 2006) with equal opportunities developing into an equal opportunity or right to be unequal, with the consequence that it becomes a debilitated and weak procedural instrument for combating gender inequalities (Allen, Barry and Berg, 2008). Neo-liberal shifts in many European countries (Harvey 2005, Hirst 1998) have also exacerbated the challenges for gender issues in the public sector, putting pressure on the work life balance (Glover and Kirton 2006). In attempting to implement changes, the new public sector managerialism has been acting as its organisational glue. However, despite emanating from above (Barry et al 2006), change has been neither predictable nor linear and impossible to view as occurring at fixed moments in time progressing towards a prefigured future ((Tsoukas and Chia 2002). Change attempts have instead taken place through time, their processes having been subjected to difficulties, obstacles, blockages and refusals (Clarke 2004) in the everyday routines of organisational life, and experienced in different ways by those involved, who are likely to have different views on future change. This track invites theoretically and/or empirically informed papers from different disciplines that explore public sector change that take account of gender and equal opportunities issues. Papers that explore the influences of the present neo-liberal context and the new public sector managerialism as they affect the gender balance in differing international settings would be especially welcome, although this can be accomplished by focusing on differing national and local contexts.

Possible themes:

- Women and men in a changing public sector;
- Management reform and consequences from a gendered perspective;
- Changes in public sector from a management perspective;
- Changes in public sector from an equal opportunity perspective;
- Gender and management identities;
- Work life balance,

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