

Call for abstracts

Panel: “Equality and inclusion in knowledge-intensive public organizations and work”

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This panel centres on the interconnections between equality, inclusion, knowledge work and leadership in public organizations and related theoretical, methodological and empirical questions. It addresses the community of researchers interested in social sustainability in public organizations through the themes of equality and inclusion, and encourages to develop new approaches to advance it.

In this panel, we focus on examining individual-level experiences. We invite papers exploring the themes of equality and inclusion in public organizations using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Theoretical and conceptual papers as well as literature reviews are also welcome. Proposed papers can be in the early stages of development (e.g., data has not been collected) or more developed. We encourage researchers also to use critical and creative methods to study these topics.

We aim to bring together the latest research around equality and inclusion within knowledge-intensive public organizations and work. We especially welcome studies examining how perceptions and experiences of (in)equality and inclusion affect work behaviors and attitudes (e.g., career choices) of public sector employees characterized by different backgrounds and family situations, and how leadership practices are entwined in these experiences (Lund & Tienari, 2019). These might include learning to deal with the challenges of remote work of knowledge-intensive public organizations and developing leadership practices that support or encouraging people to sustain their wellbeing by promoting an equal, supportive and inclusive workplace atmosphere.

In today's society, intangible services have become an increasingly important source of economic growth, thus underscoring the importance of knowledge-intensive work (Jorgenson & Timmer, 2011). Moreover, given that many global (e.g., global warming) and local challenges are extremely complex by nature requiring the capability to use and combine knowledge to generate new innovative solutions, knowledge-intensive work is heightened in modern society. It is also relevant to question what it means to be an expert or perform knowledge intensive work in contemporary work organisations. Simply put, knowledge-intensive work refers to work that revolves around the use of knowledge, and successful completion of it requires individuals to have extensive theoretical knowledge and experience (Alvesson, 2004), whereas knowledge-intensive organizations can be defined as organizations that offer knowledge-intensive expert services to create public value (Grossi et al., 2020).

To tackle the critical problems of contemporary times and to ensure sustainable economic growth, societies should strive for more equality. Furthermore, in response to a turbulent world characterised by economic, political and social challenges that affect people and organisations, leading businesses and people call for new forms of leadership in public organizations and beyond. Therefore, in this panel, we are eager to uncover these kinds of novel managerial practices, such as the one of fostering

work environments in which weaknesses are used as starting points for improvement rather than as targets of punitive measures (Brescoll, 2016; Corlett, Ruane & Mavin, 2021; Polzer, Nolte & Seiwald, 2023), in order to create more socially sustainable workplaces.

In addition, both United Nations and OECD recognize and emphasize the importance of egalitarian work life for the well-being of individuals and thriving societies. Although Western societies have become more egalitarian, more work must be done. For example, to succeed in one's career, one must adopt an "ideal worker norm" driven by masculine traits (e.g., competitiveness, devotion to the organization) and career structures (Huopainen & Satama, 2019; Kallio *et al.*, 2016). These practices, in turn, can drive and sustain inequalities and unequal career practices and affect work behaviors/attitudes because masculine ideals dominate organizational (career) structures, as well as create a sense of 'Otherness' in the workplace (Pullen & Simpson, 2009). However, the specific effects of (in)equality and inclusion on career progression, attitudes, and work behaviors represent still understudied in the context of public organizations.

This panel promotes equality between people and the prevention of all discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, ethnic origin, religion, conviction, sexual orientation, disability, or other. The promise of this panel is therefore a deepening of our understanding of the equal and inclusive actions and practices at work.

We invite papers that might take up the challenge to explore any of the following topics, but are not restricted to these:

- How can knowledge-work be defined or described in contemporary work organizations?
- How do organizational practices and experiences of (in)equality and inclusion affect individual-level work behaviors (e.g., motivation), goals, and outcomes (e.g., career satisfaction, creativity)?
- How does a competitive work environment (e.g., performance pressure or a strive for perfection) define and affect knowledge-intensive workers' careers and career choices with different genders and family situations?
- How is gender related to career inequalities in public work organizations, for example, with regard to gendered emotional displays, social practices and role models?
- What kind of career inequalities do knowledge-intensive workers with families face and experience and what factors drive these experiences?
- How are leadership practices entwined with experiences of career inequalities among knowledge-intensive workers?
- How do the administrative structures and/or challenges affect the agency and everyday-work of people performing knowledge-intensive public services?
- What kinds of methodological approaches can be applied to study equality and inclusion in public organizations? What kinds of (creative) research methods can be applied to tease out the dynamics of contemporary knowledge-intensive work?
- What are the consequences of bringing *accounting* and calculative practices into the equality and inclusion discourse, and how are such practices shaped and negotiated in practice (e.g. gender budgeting)?

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