

## **When, why and how organisations respond to diversity**

Workshop co-organised by the *Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity* in Göttingen, the *Göttingen Diversity Research Institute* at Göttingen University, and Kassel University

### **Call for Papers**

It is widely recognized that many present-day societies have become increasingly diverse. This analysis/observation usually refers to three phenomena: a) due mainly to migration, the populations of cities and nation states now encompass people of a wider range of backgrounds, ethnic and religious identification; b) the link between particular class backgrounds, as well as between gender, and particular life styles and normative orientations has become weaker and a broader range of such orientations are tolerated; c) equal rights for those of minority sexual orientations and the disabled are demanded more vocally, and such demands are increasingly accepted as legitimate.

How far (and in what ways) do such changes challenge existing organisations and institutions, how do they deal with them, and how can we account for differing responses?

Existing research has charted the rise of diversity management and diversity programmes. Their often superficial character and the subordination of equal-opportunities-demands under profit interests – the so called business case – have been much criticized. While attention so far has focussed on the economic sphere, this workshop looks at public and political organisations/institutions and the relevant institutional fields in which they are embedded. Often such organisations/institutions claim to pursue a universalistic approach (education for all children) or to address mainly one differentiation. A recognition of, and active response to, diversity may be perceived as conflicting with such orientations and may run against the operational logics of an organisation. We are particularly interested in work on city administrations, welfare state institutions (e.g. in health, higher education) and political organisations (parties, NGOs). We do not restrict the scope of the discussion to particular countries.

Further, we would like to test the usefulness of “diversity” as an analytical concept. Is “diversity” more than a slogan or buzz word of companies or state institutions we then critically examine? Is it mainly an umbrella term for different equal-rights demands of underprivileged groups? Do organisations indeed respond to “diversity”, or do we thus merge rather different processes and challenges? And how and when is it helpful to examine what may be seen as a set of complex phenomena as one phenomenon, i.e. “diversity” (or difference, heterogeneity, social inequality.....)?

We invite papers that either offer a discussion of such questions or present examples of an analytical engagement with the interaction of organisations/institutions with “diversity”.

The planned event will be a workshop in the sense of a meeting of about 20 to 30 people with plenty of time for discussions. We envisage oral presentations of about 20 minutes and written summaries or full papers (1500 – 5000 words) to be submitted one month before the event. English will be the working language. Participants will come from different disciplinary backgrounds.

### **The workshop will be held in Göttingen, Germany, on 6 and 7 February 2014.**

Colleagues interested in presenting a paper at the workshop should send an abstract of about 400 to 600 words and a brief biographical note. It would be helpful if you could indicate how the suggested paper relates to a larger context (i.e. presents the results of a PhD dissertation, a section of a larger project on ....., is based on fieldwork in .., a survey of 37 NGOs, etc.). Please send your abstracts until 21 October 2013, you will be notified early in November whether your paper has been accepted. Travel and accommodation costs for those giving papers can be subsidised.

Abstracts should be sent to:

Karen Schönwälder

Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity /

Max-Planck-Institut zur Erforschung multireligiöser und multiethnischer Gesellschaften

Hermann-Föge-Weg 11, D-37073 Göttingen, Germany

tel.: +49/0 551 4956-129, fax +49/0 551 4956-170

e-mail: [schoenwaelder@mmg.mpg.de](mailto:schoenwaelder@mmg.mpg.de)