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Special Issue

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Topic: National context in work-life research

Management research is increasingly devoting efforts to the adequate consideration of context. Multi-level data are collected and analyzed and research findings are contextualized to highlight the situated nature of the phenomena that are studied and of the knowledge that is produced. However, little research has thought to use or build frameworks able to go **beyond contextualization**, so as to **theorize context** and narrow the micro-macro gap in management research. Work-life research is no exception: increasingly work-life scholars conduct cross-national comparative research, yet there are few integrative multi-level theoretical frameworks that enable them to conceptualize the different layers of context and their interactions, and few empirical studies to test these frameworks.

This special issue focuses on a distinctive dimension of context, **national context**, and more specifically on **the role that the structural and cultural dimensions of national context play in work-life/work-family research**. Traditionally, national context has been understood from an institutional perspective, focusing on a country's national institutions or systems of institutions, and from a cultural perspective, focusing on values and beliefs systems.

Work-life/work-family research is particularly sensitive to national context, to the extent that national context may influence research:

- At the macro level (public policy),
- At the meso level (HR practices, work-life culture, workgroups dynamics),
- At the micro level (individual attitudes and behaviors),
- And the epistemic levels (production of knowledge).

This special issue aims at making a contribution to work-life research and beyond, by inviting manuscripts that theorize national context and/or present robust methods to capture the influence of national context in work-life research.

We invite manuscripts addressing the following questions:

(1) **How can national context be conceptualized in work-life/work-family research?** And in particular:

- What are the most relevant institutional and cultural frameworks for work-life research? To what extent can the institutional and the cultural approaches be articulated to theorize national context?
- How can the cross-level relationships between higher-level national context factors (e.g. public provisions, tax system, education system, labour market, gender ideology) and lower-level work-life factors (e.g. individuals' attitudes and behaviors, organizational practices, unions' stance towards work-life) be specified?
- What are the most salient elements of national context that impact work-life at the organization and individual levels?
- How can national context be conceptualized in a dynamic way accounting for social and economic change as well as trans-national influences (e.g. European Union impulse, multinationals)?
- How can within-country heterogeneity (e.g. occupational, regional, socio-demographic and individual differences) be accounted for when theorizing national context?
- How can theories of national context be operationalized to design robust work-life/work-family research that goes beyond contextualization?

(2) **What does national context explain in work-life/work-family research?** And in particular:

- How does national context shape work-life attitudes and behaviors at the **individual** level – e.g. work-life conflict, work-life enrichment, segmentation and integration of work and non-work, employee sense of entitlement towards work-life support, employee awareness and use of work-life initiatives;
- How does national context shape work-life attitudes and behaviors at the **workgroup and organizational** level – e.g. adoption and implementation of work-life programs and practices, work-life culture within organizations and work groups, supervisor and co-worker support, outcomes of work-life initiatives for employees and organizations;
- How does national context shape work-life policies and public provisions at the **national** level – e.g. personal and family leaves, childcare and educations systems, life-long learning, tax systems that encourage or discourage dual-careers;
- How do researchers' nationality(ies) and/or countries of socialization shape work-life research at the **epistemic** level – e.g. the way scholars select and ask research questions, design research, interpret findings, write manuscripts and diffuse knowledge.

We welcome conceptual and empirical manuscripts that make a strong theoretical contribution as to how national context can be conceptualized in work-life/work-family research and/or a strong methodological contribution as to how national context can be apprehended in comparative work-life/work-family research. Manuscripts that compare work-life phenomena across countries without offering a strong theorization of national context will not be considered.

Manuscripts that develop or apply multi-level frameworks, manuscripts that span disciplinary boundaries and qualitative manuscripts are particularly welcome.

Contributors should note:

- This call is open and competitive, and the submitted manuscripts will be blind reviewed in the normal way.
- Submitted manuscripts must be based on original material not under consideration by any other journal or outlet.

The deadline for submissions is March 15, 2012.

This special issue is intended for publication mid 2013.

Manuscripts to be considered for this special issue should follow the directions described on the EMJ website and be submitted online: please refer to <http://ees.elsevier.com/emj/>. When submitting, please choose “**Special Issue: Nat. context & work-life**” as the paper type.

You may direct questions to one of the guest editors:

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Ellen Ernst Kossek is University Distinguished Professor at Michigan State University's School of Human Resources & Labor Relations. Her research involves managing organizational change on workplace flexibility, work and family/non-work relationships, work processes, and the employment relationship; international human resources management: workplace inclusion; gender, and diversity. She has published widely in referred journals, served on many editorial boards, and authored or edited 9 books including "CEO of Me: Creating a Life That Works in the Flexible Job Age" on work-life patterns. She has also won awards for her research and received major funding from foundations, governments and employers.