



Intercultural research and training

Association loi 1901

3 rue Pache 75011

[www.elaninterculturel.com](http://www.elaninterculturel.com)

---

# “ Diversity as a source of creativity and innovation ”

REPORT ON HERA JRP NETWORKING GRANT 08-HERA-031 REF N° 118 UNDER  
THEME C: CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

20-21 NOVEMBER 2008 PARIS

---

## THEME FOR THE MEETING

Cultural diversity is often claimed to be a source of richness and a catalyst of processes of creativity and innovation. The relationship between diversity and creativity has been shown in many laboratory experiments, but up to the present there is little research evidence for the phenomenon in real life conditions. Nor have the underlying mechanisms been sufficiently explored. Accordingly, our seminar intends to revisit the hypothesis of diversity as source of creativity in real life settings, to explore its conditions and to understand the underlying mechanisms. We are particularly interested in identifying the individual learning styles that trigger creativity and help transforming diversity into a source of innovation.

---

## PARTICIPANTS

- Lakhbir Bandal one of three founding Director's of the Change Institute (CI), established in 2005. CI is a research and management consultancy specialising in organisational and community development in the fields of equality, diversity and social change.
- Prof Dorothy Miell, Dean and Director of Studies, Social Sciences Faculty Open University, London. Co-editor of (2004) 'Collaborative Creativity' London: Free Association books and (2004) 'Learning to Collaborate, Collaborating to Learn' New York: Nova Science
- Dr. Bernard Nijstad Associate professor, Department of Psychology, University of Amsterdam. Participated in the research on “Diversity and the creative capacity of organisations and teams”, co-edited “Group creativity – innovation through collaboration”.
- Vera Varhegyi, Cecile Stola. Phd students of intercultural psychology, researchers within Elan Interculturel.

---

## AGENDA OF THE SEMINAR

20<sup>th</sup> November 15-18

Session 1.:

Presentations from participants: what link between diversity, creativity and innovation?

21<sup>st</sup> November

Session 2.

Presentation of the HERA program

Discussion of research projects on the relationship of creativity and diversity.

---

## SESSION 1. PRESENTATIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS.

**Lakhbir Bandal**

Cultural policies as catalysts of creativity

Enhanced innovation and creativity are often highlighted as important benefits of increased diversity in organisations. While this conception of creativity focuses on team working in organisations, an increasing proportion of businesses (the 'creative industries') in Europe now derive their income from creative outputs. The Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity refers explicitly to cultural industries, in which the development of creative capital (in the form of 'investment' vs public subsidy) is believed to flow into and drive further creativity and innovation in the creative industries, and therefore enhance the competitive advantage of a sector defined by the quality of its creative outputs.

**Prof Dorothy Miell,**

Enabling Creative Collaborations

The presentation explored the conditions underlying successful creative collaborations (such as shared goals, communication, trust etc) and how these conditions can be fostered in order to enable collaboration that is truly creative. Implications for creativity in contexts of diversity and the challenges for collaborating in such contexts were drawn out through a case study about the collaboration of an artist and a scientist.

**Dr. Bernard Nijstad**

Diversity and creativity in groups: A vital role for motivation

Diversity potentially has positive effects on group creativity or team innovation, because different group members bring non-overlapping resources (knowledge, skills) to the group. However, effective group processes are necessary for this potential to be realized. Based on our Motivated Information Processing in Groups (MIP-G) model (De Dreu, Nijstad, & Van Knippenberg, 2008), I argue that group member motivation critically determines the degree to which effective group processes occur. In particular, members must have a high level of epistemic motivation, and be willing to think thoroughly about the task at hand. They must also have a high level of pro-social motivation, and be willing to work in the interest of the group. I will discuss several lab studies of group creativity and a field study of team innovation. These studies show that a cooperative team climate, provided that it is coupled with high levels of epistemic motivation, can lead to creativity and innovation when this is perceived to be important for the group. While these studies were done with relatively homogeneous groups, I argue that these factors might be even more critical when groups are more diverse.

Vera Varhegyi, Cecile Stola.

What competences for cooperating in heterogeneous groups?

A research launched by the OECD entitled the Definition and Selection of Competencies (DeSeCo) identified interaction in heterogeneous groups as one out of the three basic domains of competences needed for successful life and well-functioning society (OECD 2003). In our presentation we wish to explore further this competence area. Through a short review of previous research and with the presentation of empirical results, we looked at the critical moments of heterogeneous team cooperation and look for the competences that enable to make it an advantage.