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“Impacting the bottom-line” or “doing the right thing”? How diversity managers relate to antidiscrimination norms in the US and France

The rise of diversity management, which took place in the US corporate world before spreading out globally, has been studied as an emblematic case of the managerialization of antidiscrimination principles: diversity is “good for business”, rather than being “the right thing to do”.

Drawing on 80 in-depth interviews with diversity managers working in the headquarters of multinational companies in the New York and Paris areas, this comparative study unpacks the transnational category of diversity management and emphasizes its various meanings in the two national contexts. It shows that beyond a common shift from “compliance” to “diversity”, the process of managerialization of antidiscrimination norms is far from being homogeneous. Diversity management offers a window on differences between the US and France in ways of drawing boundaries between business, legal, and moral principles.