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and more inclusive cultures.'** – *Financial Times*



**JAM
CULTURES**

Inclusion: having a seat at the table, a voice and a vote

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Management Impact

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INTRODUCTION



About diversity,
inclusion and
Jam Cultures

The essence

In essence, inclusion is about who is allowed to participate, who is allowed to express their opinion and who is allowed to help shape decisions. Inclusion is also about who is denied these opportunities, because some people are not permitted to participate. They're excluded—from work, politics, or education, for instance. Once they're sidelined, they can only stand by and watch. Others are allowed to participate, but have no say in the ground rules, the basic conditions; these might be about the distribution of wealth, or what conduct is permissible, or what goals a particular business should try to achieve. Being allowed to take part but not speak their mind makes these people feel ignored, so they grow demotivated and leave—though some may stay (and complain). And then you have those who are allowed to participate and speak their mind, but whose voice is consistently ignored in decision-making. True, this is inclusion, but it falls short of people's needs and spreads negativity. Obviously, we can't discuss everything with everyone all the time. There are limits, and often leadership is required. Nevertheless, we need to make the game so attractive that everyone wants to get involved and feels that they belong.

Inclusion is about people being able to be themselves and work well with others at the same time. It's about achieving unity while remaining open to all sorts of differences within the group and beyond. It's about learning to deal with differences and about clashing opinions with people we don't know, don't always understand and in some cases, don't even like. Hence, inclusion is about limits, leadership, power, privilege, conflict, emotions, curiosity, differences and similarities. It's about actively engaging people, inviting dissenting opinions and including these in decision-making. The less diverse the group, the more pressure its members feel to adapt to the dominant majority. The more diverse it is, the more challenging it becomes for everyone to get on the same page.

Everyone deals with the inclusion paradox all their lives: how to be yourself, yet adapt. Part of you searches for what makes you different, what makes you stand out, for a clear identity that gives you the agency and restrictions you need to maneuver in the world as an authentic, autonomous individual. However another part of you seeks security, looks for the common ground you share with others. You want to belong, be part of a whole, and live your life in mutual trust and loyalty.

You want both of these at the same time. Together, yet independent. *Independently connected*. The challenge is to connect with people without losing yourself. To be yourself without pushing others away. To set boundaries where you need to, and open up where you can. Every individual must find their own, unique balance. In relation to others, every individual must also deal with the question of who gets to draw the boundaries and who gets to guard them. Who gets to play and who doesn't? This process is called inclusion, and it is informed by the dynamics of power and difference. I call this 'jamming', because it's like a jam session where we're all trying to find our own voice, summoning the courage to make it heard, and tuning in to each other to create a better sound.

A celebration, or a challenge?

How many times have we heard the tired phrase 'celebrate diversity'? Greater diversity is presented as a treasure trove of opportunities, creativity, music, dance and good food. Although diversity can produce a variety of ideas that leads to creativity and innovation, in reality it doesn't always feel positive. Particularly when you just fundamentally disagree with a certain co-worker. Or if you can't mention the love of your life because being openly gay is ridiculed in the workplace. Or if you feel you have to work harder than others to get that promotion because of your ethnic background.

Inclusion means dealing with differences, strangers, emotions and conflict, scarcity and privilege, inclusion and exclusion, power and powerlessness. Nothing is harder than jointly creating



IMAGE: UNSPLASH

an environment where everybody gets to participate, regardless of their ethnic background, skin color, religion, social class, level of education, sexual orientation or gender.

Diversity has fascinated me for as long as I can remember. I thoroughly enjoy all the different types of people I meet and their wide array of stories, parties, behaviors, languages, ideas and religions. Those differences make us human. I shudder at the idea of everyone being exactly the same. And yet, sometimes I do have a problem with the fact that my neighbor disagrees with me about how to cut back the tree on our joint property line. And I can get really upset with my son for wanting to shower in his underwear at school. I get incensed when I hear that Muslim girls have a harder time finding internships than my own daughter. And as a woman, I get very angry when someone takes me less seriously than any of the men in my workplace. Diversity disrupts my flow and forces me to look in the mirror. I don't always like that.

Diversity is a topic fraught with emotion. If you bring up exclusion, discrimination, privilege or unconscious bias, you'd better prepare to take some flak, or at least eye-rolling. Most organizations prefer to talk about working together on a common goal, leadership, technology, social innovation and strategic renewal. Inclusion may be essential, but it's not an easy topic. Living and working side by side with other great people (and sometimes not so great people!) tends to be messy, and a delicate process, too.

Five Essential Themes and Eight Principles

This book puts forward five themes I consider essential for creating a more inclusive environment: difference, power, truth, trust and courage. Every chapter contains an explanation of the theme and the theory behind it, questions to help you reflect on the subject and activities to deepen your understanding. As you read these five chapters, you will find that I have interwoven them with eight principles of living and working more inclusively. I came up with these principles while working in organizations and discussed them in my earlier book *Wow! What a Difference!* All eight principles are summarized in Appendix III of the book you are now reading. They are: Do Not Clone, See the Power of Power, Challenge the Truth, Enjoy the Unknown, Not Either-Or But And/And, Hunt for Alternative Views, Vary the Rhythm, and Do It Together.

The Jam Circle in Chapter 1 shows you how to work with difference. The circle is based on these questions: how much diversity are we willing and able to take on? And how much diversity do we have to deal with, simply because we live and work side by side? I can't provide one ultimate

answer to these questions. It's up to you, and the people you live and work with, to do that together. Appendix I contains a Jam Cultures Questionnaire and in Appendix II, you'll find a Jam Cultures Canvas. Both documents will help you continue the dialogue about inclusion, power and diversity and translate these discussions into concrete steps in your own social environment.

Throughout this book, you will also find personal reflections. These are passages that I read aloud during my talks. They're my attempt to express the emotions surrounding diversity and inclusion. They're my expression of the underlying and unacknowledged feelings linked to our interactions. These texts led to some heated debate between me and my associates who read and critiqued the rough drafts of this book. Some strongly encouraged me to scrap them, for a variety of reasons: they were too childish, they were stylistically jarring, they read like spontaneous talk and not the kind of language you would want to print and they read like they came straight out of a *New Age* magazine and would alienate managers. Others argued the opposite. They said the passages were highly relevant, personal, sensitive and a badly-needed respite from the logical and rational. The debate itself was what convinced me to include the texts. After all, that's what I think diversity is all about. It's about speaking up, letting my own voice ring true and overcoming my fear of being ridicule. It's about formulating my thoughts and feelings, taking the risk of expressing them in public, and hoping that others are willing to listen to them—rather than dismiss them because they sound strange or wrong. It feels scary; I know that those who leave the beaten path risk rejection. And you will probably read these personal texts even more critically, now that I have drawn attention to them like this, which makes me even more vulnerable. But that's how it works in diversity: anything that's different and stands out always sparks controversy. It is *matter out of space* (see Chapter 4 on Trust). Once we've found a way to pigeonhole a person or an idea, the discussion peters out. And that's exactly what happened to my personal texts, once the layout for this book was done. Suddenly, these jarring, childish words looked like lyrics and one of my critics suddenly saw the light, saying, "Oh, now I understand their place and their function in this book." Aren't humans great?

Inclusion is not a rational issue that we can resolve merely by understanding theories. It's an emotional matter requiring us to use all our senses in order to get somewhere together.

Jamming with difference

Jamming means acting from a position of uncertainty, because you don't know exactly where you're headed. But one thing is absolutely certain: everybody is genuinely interested in listening to each other.

JAM CULTURES



I SEE YOU. YOU SEE ME. WE SMILE. CAUTIOUSLY AT FIRST, BUT WITH GROWING CURIOSITY. WE EMBRACE EACH OTHER IN OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER. WE DANCE OUR DANCE OF SIMILARITIES. AND WHEN WE FEEL OUR DIFFERENCES, SUDDENLY AND UNEXPECTED, WE SMILE OUR OTHERNESS AWAY. WE'LL DEAL WITH THAT LATER, BUT NOT TODAY.

I WANT FAMILIAR, BUT YOU GIVE ME STRANGE. YOU CHALLENGE MY OBVIOUS. MY HEART BEATS. I WHISPER: I WANT THE ENERGY, BUT NOT THE TENSION. YOUR STRANGE PUTS ME OFF BALANCE. I TRY TO FIND OUR HARMONY BUT LOSE MYSELF A LITTLE. NOTE BY NOTE.

OUR UNCERTAINTIES VIBRATE BETWEEN US. I SPEAK MY MIND. YOU EXPRESS YOUR THOUGHTS. OUR UNSPOKEN DESIRES FILL IN THE SILENCE BETWEEN US. I FEEL TEARS WELLING UP IN MY EYES. MY BODY TREMBLES AS I THINK OF LOSING THAT WHAT I KNOW.

SLOWLY, I FEEL THE FLOW OF POSSIBILITIES. OUR WORDS FORM THE RHYTHM OF OUR SPEECH. WE TALK ON AND ON AND ON AND ON... WE ARE MOVE BY EACH WORD THAT WE HEAR.

EVERY WORD MAKES OUR TOGETHERNESS GROOVE. EACH SILENCE BRINGS NEW SOUNDS TO OUR BEING. OUR IDEAS ARE DANCING TO THE BEAT OF OUR DIFFERENCES. THEY GIVE THE RHYTHM WE MOVE TO. ME AND MY SOUND. YOU AND YOURS. I REDISCOVER MYSELF IN THE FLOW OF OUR TOGETHERNESS.

LET'S FIND OUR GROOVE. JOIN THE JAM.

Jitske Kramer

About me: who am I to talk?

Over the past 25 years, I've occupied myself with diversity and inclusion in all sorts of ways.

I read and wrote about it while getting my Cultural Anthropology degree. I worked on it as a trainer/consultant/facilitator in both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations in the Netherlands and abroad. Every one of my books and presentations addresses this issue, either directly or indirectly (see www.humandimensions.com). As a team, my co-workers and I have trained several thousand people in Deep Democracy, a method designed to teach inclusive decision-making (see www.deepdemocracy.nl).

Sometimes I receive critical looks that translate into: who are you to talk about diversity and inclusion? After all, I'm white, heterosexual, highly-educated, upper middle-class, with a Christian background, and my bodily functions are all in good working order. Sure, I am a woman, but don't belong to a significant minority in the Netherlands. I could argue that I have a Friesian name and that I was passionate korfbal player—go ahead and Google it—until the age of 18. Talk about First World problems. So, who am I to claim any expertise on exclusion, microaggression, discrimination or everyday racism...?

I can draw on a few personal experiences, actually. Like moving from the west to the north of the country as a little girl, like being the only kid who liked comedy and protest songs when everyone else was a Madonna or Michael Jackson fan, like being the only white member of a traveling Ugandan theater group, like being a woman in the male-dominated world of public speakers and entrepreneurs. But that's all small stuff compared to the experiences of those who've had to flee their country, who've lived as expats for years, who've suffered discrimination based on their skin color, sexual orientation or religion. I can empathize with these experiences, but I haven't lived them. I'm privileged in the sense that I can blend in again after a heated debate on inclusion. I can opt to dip into the stressful issues of diversity, but afterwards I can just as easily retreat to my comfort zone. I live most of my life as part of a dominant, privileged majority.

In my work, I've been personally criticized for being a white, privileged, highly-educated, liberal, heterosexual woman. I've been told it's easy for me to talk. And I've angrily been told "*this is not your fight*," as if I were trying to co-opt minority issues for personal or professional

gain. When, in mixed company, I've mentioned my occasional insecurity about which words are appropriate for discussing diversity and skin color, I've been accused of hijacking the debate to yet again foreground white people and their emotions.

Such moments are uncomfortable. Others frame my attempts to explore my own position on these issues as examples of white arrogance or ignorance. When I express my discomfort, and say my timing must be off but my intentions are good, I am told that my intentions "make no difference." Checkmate. And when I bring up the shortage of women in talk shows and conference programs, I appear to be promoting myself. Like I said, diversity and inclusion are uncomfortable topics.

Yet, I also meet people of all colors, backgrounds, walks of life and ages who are overcome by emotion, touched, helpless or hopeful. That's because they identify with what I talk about, because my words reflect their feelings. It's because they finally know what they need to do, because anthropological studies and theories give us words that help us to identify and describe inclusion processes.

Everything I do revolves around these questions: 'What does it mean to be human?' 'How can we be human and live in connection with other humans?' 'Why do people act the way they do?' 'Why don't they act differently?' 'And why do they resort to violence when they disagree?' I lie awake at night contemplating these questions. I think these are questions everyone should care about, no matter what your origin, life experience, or political affiliation. I must consider them from my own personal background, you must do it from yours. Because we're both human. That's why.

About you, my readers

We don't know each other. You'll get to know me a little through this book, but I won't get to know you at all. I don't know who you are, what you look like or what your background is. You might be a manager or a teacher. You could be religious or devoutly atheist. Perhaps you are a refugee and know first-hand what it's like to live in different cultures. Or you might never have moved and experienced how tense it can be to be around people from a different culture. You might be a student, or a seasoned board member. Maybe you're opposed to letting more

immigrants settle in your country, or maybe you're all for it. You could be mainly interested in organizational dynamics, or mainly in social dynamics. You might be male, or female, or neither ... the truth is, I will never know.

When you start writing a book, your first question is: who am I writing it for? How much does my target audience already know? What do they want to learn? What is their context, their 'habitat'? Their role, their position? I don't know. Because I don't know you. The only thing I know is that you're a fellow human being and that we inhabit this world together. And that's why I have written this book for you as human beings. It may contain stuff you already know; so you might as well skip those parts. And if it offends you because of how I phrase certain things, my apologies. Perhaps you'll deem my tone too lighthearted or too heavy-handed. Too non-committal? Too positive? Maybe you'll think my examples are too focused on ethnicity, gender, religion, age, LGBTQIAPK+, competences, leadership, lower-ranking employees, or not enough on social context. Or too much on social context ... And that's all fine.

I hope to evoke a sense of wonder, and to spark more questions, incentives and insights that will activate us to make the world a far more attractive playing field for anyone and everyone. In management speak, that's called inclusion, sustainability and agility. In plain English, that's called good for everyone, including yourself; good for the planet; and being flexible when things turn out differently. I will mostly write in plain English and leave it up to you to add the management jargon in your own mind. And I hope that we will learn to talk and collaborate in ways that honor and make use of all our differences at as many board room tables, cafeteria tables, conference tables, school tables and kitchen tables as possible. That process is what I call jamming. It would be great if this book contributed to that.

Inclusion, what's that?

Inclusion is a somewhat technical term for something essentially human and warm. It's about having a seat at the table, having a voice and having a vote. It's about exploring how we connect with others. How we enter into genuine relationships. How we co-create. It's about holding space for the pretty as well as the nasty. Giving room and taking up room. Autonomy and togetherness. It's about a way of collaborating, living and being that allows everyone to be themselves. To shine, but also to cry. To feel hope and fear, power and helplessness.

Inclusion is about how to be humans together. Genuine and meaningful relationship blossom when we see the good in each other, but also when we share our less pleasant sides. If we are to put people at the center of our actions, we need to have the courage to show each other every side of ourselves. That is, without immediately excluding or disqualifying others because they look different, have a different nationality, talk funny or have different ideas. Inclusion means making room for sadness and looking for love in the small stuff. Not passing each other like ships in the night and shaking hands only with each other's job profile, but approaching each other with sincerity, open-mindedness, curiosity and wonder. Leaving room for real talk, doubts and desires, while connecting with mutual similarities and differences. Inclusion means stopping the tyranny of both the majority and the minority. Inclusion means opening up to each other, but also setting limits for yourself.

This might strike you as soft, idealistic and way out there on Planet Kramer. I can say the same thing in management speak: Inclusion is adapting your processes in order to keep talent on board, eradicate a culture of fear, increase active participation, grow employee support, root out bullying, hold leaders accountable for the organizational climate, reduce the talent drain, place responsibility as far down the corporate hierarchy as possible, initiate participation processes, optimize vertical collaboration in the supply chain, adjust KPIs to more customer-centered targets, create coherence from incoherence, be agile, put the focus on soft controls such as integrity and trust, boost corporate values, encourage personal entrepreneurship, break down silos, increase individual professionalism and prevent internal division between departments ... In other words, inclusion.

Conventional organizational science dictates every indicator to be measurable, transparent and verifiable. Obviously, that's not always possible. Some things can't be understood, measured or quantified. Perhaps it's precisely those intangibles that cannot be pinned down that are the most important things. Sometimes, the invisible undercurrent is more influential than its visible manifestation. Even in the workplace. After all, we cannot and need not understand everything. People generally just mess around with the best of intentions. Things that we can only feel—say love, loyalty and trust—are no less real.

Exclusion is the result of too much inclusion

Too much inclusion and connection with likeminded people leads to exclusion of others. Pigeonholing, wall-building and discrimination are not caused by exclusion. Paradoxically, they are caused by over-inclusion, by an excessive love for the people that look and think like us. People close the doors of their homes to protect their loved ones, not because they hate strangers.

Inclusion Defined as Do's and Don'ts

Inclusion is about what happens in the attraction and repulsion process. It's about understanding each other and the will to understand each other. About who gets a seat at the table, who can join the action, who is allowed to voice their opinion and who, ultimately, has the power to decide. If we organize this interaction and decision-making process well, there's connection and flow. If we fail to do this, we're faced with alienation and conflict.

While inclusion means that everyone's welcome, it doesn't mean that any type of behavior is welcome. This a line we need to agree on and draw. And therefore, inclusion is about power. After all, who is allowed to draw the line, and where? Who sets the standards, who defines what's normal and who determines the distribution of money, jobs, promotions, food and other privileges?






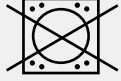






Do	Don't	Do	Don't
			
Listen to all stakeholders and opinions for the sake of making progress.	Negotiate endlessly or debate tirelessly in order to reach weak compromises.	Make use of each other's differences.	Teach each other a lesson.
			
Engage the right people, with the necessary knowledge and experience, involved.	Involve everyone in everything.	Support people so they can shine.	Outdo the other, or protect those who underperform.
			
Look at an issue from all sides with an eye to the organization's mission, strategy and goals.	Listen to everyone's opinion on every problem under the motto: anything goes.	Solve problems on the basis of equality, without avoiding the pain.	Beat around the bush and waste your time on political games.

ILLUSTRATION: SUGGESTION & ILLUSION. FROM: KRAMER, WOW! WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

Boundaries

It's enough to make you crazy when you think about it, but there can be no inclusion without exclusion. As Dutch sociologist Paul Scheffer explained so clearly in his essay *The Freedom of the Border*, an open society can thrive only within limits. Within those boundaries we can feel free and safe. As human beings, we identify with a group and the uniqueness of that group is always defined in relation to the other. We've never been able to define who we are without reference to others.

To put it differently, because others are other, we can be ourselves. The boundary between us and them makes us who we are. Tribes, communities and organizations exist by virtue of that line between us and them, between who belongs and who doesn't. We form our own cultural identity by setting ourselves apart from the other, by seeing the difference between ourselves and the other. And sometimes we lose ourselves because of the other.

In order to promote inclusion, equity and human rights, we need to set limits on behavior and values that are at odds with these positive values. How do you protect yourself while maintaining an open and inquisitive attitude toward people who are not open-minded and curious about you, but instead want to teach you a lesson? Similar questions arise in companies, teams and families.

Societies are made up of subcultures, a multitude of all sorts of smaller communities. Not all these subcultures have the same values. Likewise, organizations have divisions, departments, teams and project groups. A single, global tribe for all of humanity seems a long way off. If subgroups, conflicting interests and competition are givens, the key question is how to foster trust and harmonious coexistence despite all the differences between these groups. An inclusive society or organization does not get rid of differences, but handles them well.

Liminal zones as a meeting ground

At some point, people from various groups or subgroups encounter one another. Traditionally, this has happened in marketplaces and along trade routes, where people exchanged stories, goods and gods, argued and fell in love. These days, the meeting grounds are in many places: from office parties where the various ranks gather around the same buffet, to the schoolyard where parents, teachers and kids meet. In *The Invention of Humanity*, Dutch historian Siep Stuurman describes how the quality of our liminal—or border—experiences determines the

meaning we assign to the other and otherness. A bad experience can lead us to conclude that the other's lifestyle is not worth further exploration. In essence, you see the other as someone of slightly less value than yourself, and if you're really honest, maybe even a little bit less human. This feeds aggression against people who are different. On the other hand, a positive experience fosters our sense of community, prompting us to stand together and fight social injustice rather than each other.

People depend on each other. It's crucial that we find ways of working together well in those liminal regions.

Setting limits

We can't exist without boundaries. We live in groups, large and small. The question of who draws the boundaries and who guards them is a tense and often painful part of our joint humanity. I am particularly fond of Vernā Myers' words: "Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to join in and dance." However, the problem with this definition is that there's someone who extends the invitation. Someone who decides whether or not to invite you. That's fine if your community is a business or some other organization with clear borders, a border patrol and a selection committee.

The problem arises when you look at the world as one big venue where everyone automatically attends the party. Then no one is in a position to extend an invitation. And yet, an essential part of your sense of community is the freedom to choose who does and doesn't fit in with the group, who gets to join and who doesn't, who you want on your team. I enjoy the personal freedom of deciding whether or not I want to welcome someone into my home or to include them in my

No cake for you

I was sitting at an outdoor café, alone. As I do from time to time. I enjoy it. The guy at the next table was there to celebrate his birthday, it turned out. More and more friends and relatives of his showed up and pulled up a chair. Some knew each other, others did not. The group kept getting bigger until the circle enveloped me and my table, too. Another woman walked up, greeted everyone, and cheerfully struck up a conversation with me. After about five minutes, she asked how I knew the guy whose birthday it was. I laughed and said I didn't. She fell silent, looked at me with an inquisitive expression, and turned her back on me to continue her conversation with other guests. I sat there in silence, a bit lost. The cake arrived. Everyone sang Happy Birthday, except me.

Strangers were included, but only if they knew the guest of honor. If not, you were left out.

work environment. Which begs the question: which criteria do I apply to this choice? How much diversity, and which type of diversity, can I, should I, and will I engage in? I'll talk more about borders and liminal zones in Chapter 1 on Difference.

People-centrism is an arrogant idea

Putting top priority on people and human relationships is considered an innovative thought. Especially in the workplace and in organizational change management, with its love of objectivation, rationalization and simplification. But there are also people who feel this people-oriented approach short-changes Mother Nature and the true diversity of life forms on this planet.

The Ecuadorian *buen vivir* concept celebrates the relationships between people, animals and plants, as I learned from a lecture on world philosophy by Dorine van Norren, a Dutch diplomat with a doctorate in International Law and Development Studies. The idea that people can be absolutely free in thought and behavior is absurd if you assume that people, animals and plants form one intricate ecosystem. If this is your frame of reference, concepts like 'development' and 'progress' no longer make sense either. In the *buen vivir* concept, there is a continuous flow of realities connecting everything with everything else. In this world view, the idea that we humans should take care of and conserve nature loses its currency, too, because that idea presumes we are superior to animals. Inclusion, in *buen vivir*, means diversity of not only people but animals and plants, as well. Even a river has a voice that needs to be heard. In this way of thinking, sustainability is human nature rather than a means to an end or one option among many. If we really acted on the idea that our humanity equals our exchange with animals and nature, board meetings would take on a whole new look and sound. To my mind, this is next-level inclusion—giving equal weight not only to every human's opinions, desires and interests, but also to those of every animal, plant, tree, mountain and body of water.

Inclusion and You

Questions to reflect on and discuss with others

- How easily do you include others in the groups you feel at home in? For example, your family and friends, but also in your workplace: your team, department or organization.
- When did you last make new friends?
- To what extent are you willing, able and forced to adopt other people's norms in order to belong?
- Were you, in your childhood, ever excluded? How did that feel?
- What is a good reason for excluding someone?
- To what extent do you take other people's interests into account in your thought and behavior? Do you consider future generations? Animals? Nature?
- How do you feel when you want to participate, but you're not allowed? Or when you have ideas relevant to the discussion, but you're not allowed to contribute to it? When a decision has an impact on you, but you're not allowed to be part of the decision-making process?

Diversity: visible and invisible differences

In and of itself, diversity is not such a difficult concept. It's about differences. It's about the differences we can see and those we can't. Living and working side by side is all about dealing with those differences. Diversity does become more problematic when you realize not every difference is welcome in every group. You can find yourself excluded because of visible differences. You may one day find, for example, that you're not appointed to the board because of your age. Boys who take ballet may be ridiculed by their classmates. Black politicians are still an exception in Dutch politics.

When it comes to invisible differences, the question is which ones you're allowed to mention and which you're not. I find it interesting that people often introduce themselves at work by naming certain invisible differences, while leaving others out. For instance, "I'm 45, married and have two kids," but not "My favorite color is blue, I believe in Allah and my motto is ..." We can choose whether or not to reveal our invisible differences to others. We tend to reveal what fits in with the mainstream of the group and avoid what sticks out. When introducing ourselves, we're more likely to say "I just got married" than "I just got divorced". Likewise, women over 45 are more likely to state "I have kids" than "I have no kids". And if they do mention it, they tend to downplay their nonconformist answers to avoid awkwardness, by saying things like, "It was a conscious choice, don't feel sorry."

Sometimes the group is fine with you having your different beliefs or characteristics as long as it isn't confronted with them. "It's fine for you to believe in your god," they tend to say. "But why do you have to show it by wearing a yarmulke, headscarf or crucifix?" Or, "it's fine if you're attracted to men, but you don't need to flaunt it." The problem is that people feel tension, stress, sadness and anger when they have to hide what's important to them. Moreover, it also begs the question that's key to all the issues surrounding inclusion: who sets the standard? Who decides what's normal? And when are you excluded? I will discuss the role of power in greater detail in Chapter 2 on Power.

Diversity is about a mix of visible and invisible differences. Inclusion is about how we deal with this mix.

► *The Iceberg of Visible and Invisible Differences.*

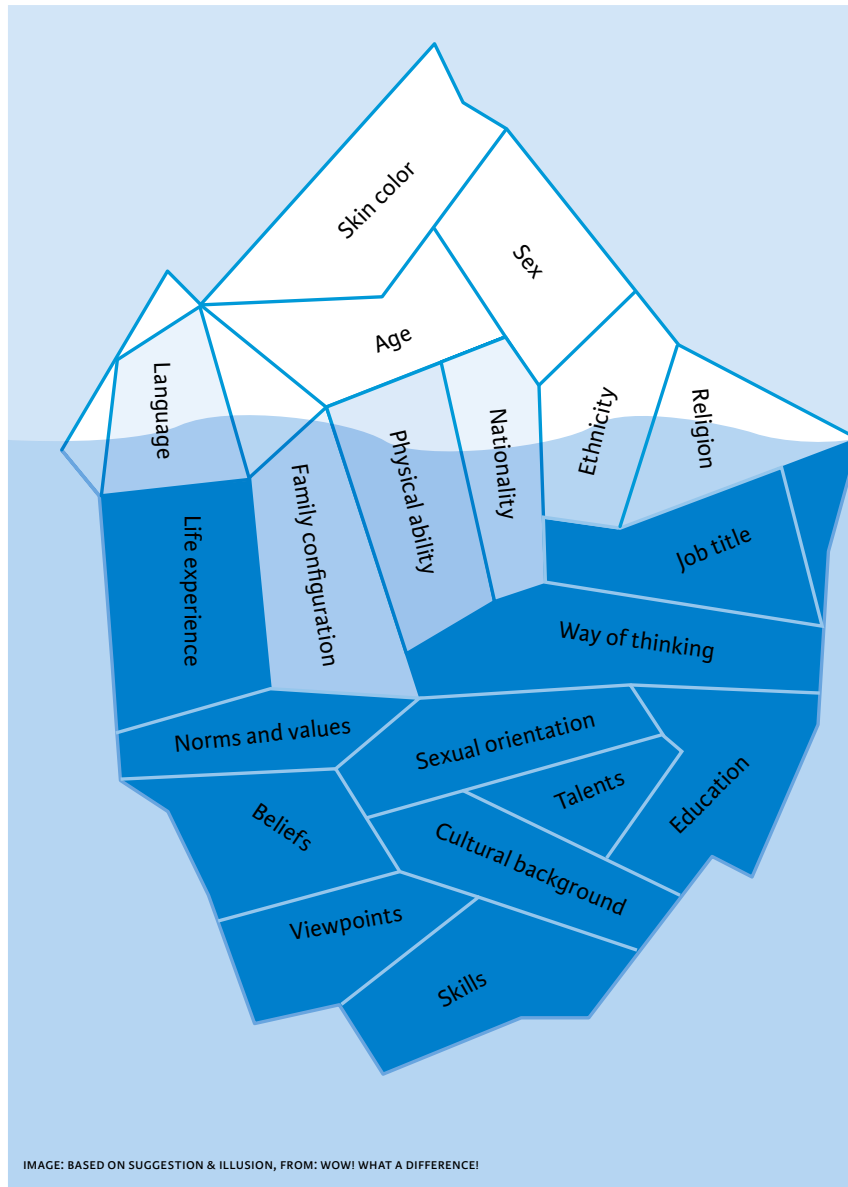


IMAGE: BASED ON SUGGESTION & ILLUSION, FROM: WOW! WHAT A DIFFERENCE!

Diversity and You

Questions to reflect on and discuss with others

- What role has diversity played in your life?
- What role does it play now?
- Which invisible differences do you sometimes keep to yourself? Why?
- Which invisible differences do you not want to discuss with coworkers? Why not?
- How many generations back can you trace your own family's history of diversity and inclusion?
- How much diversity is there in your workplace? What type of diversity? Are you part of the majority or a minority?

Diversity: a pain, or cause for optimism?

Diversity is sometimes embraced with a smile, and sometimes greeted with sighs, anxiety or anger. It's an emotional topic. Once you start talking about it, the discussion can quickly turn into an exchange of accusations. If you argue for more diversity, you're bound to be labelled a 'goody two-shoes'. If you make a case for stricter limits, you'll probably be called a 'racist'. It seems like there are only two narratives to choose from.

Two stories, each based on a very different idea:

Story 1: Living with diversity is impossible

People seek out others who are like them. That's always been the case and that's not going to change. That's the stuff we're made of. We protect our own people first, set clear boundaries and build walls to protect ourselves. Diversity is complicated. It's a hassle, and not a good idea.

Story 2: Living with diversity is possible

No two people are the same. That's always been the case and that's not going to change. That's the stuff we're made of. People have always sought out others, for trading purposes and to exchange knowledge and beliefs. Diversity is fun, productive and something to be enjoyed.

I think both viewpoints are true. There's a tension between the two that we can't avoid. It's true that the residents of Amsterdam have 188 different nationalities that usually get along peacefully. And it's true that we can have great fun barbecuing with other European nationalities when we're on vacation. However, it's just as true that the Dutch people at a campground gossip about the French and that there are ethnic subcultures in Amsterdam that don't get along with each other.

The flames of this tension are fanned by real and perceived disadvantages and the unequitable division of wealth, labor, education and privileges. Conflicts arise mainly when we experience a shortage of food, work, education, space, when we all want the same and have to share the available resources. Conflicts arise when we feel we're being short-changed. When we believe there's an elite that only looks out for itself and doesn't take others into account. And when we feel that this is based on our cultural or religious background, the color of our skin,

our age, gender or sexual orientation ... that's when things get ugly. It makes us furious. And that's exactly the problem.

In many places, people live and work together in harmony: in neighborhoods, boardrooms and schoolrooms. But at the same time, there are many places where tensions arise because of perceived or real differences and inequalities between groups of people. Inequalities that seem to be steadily getting worse, too. People love the familiar, at the same time that they follow their drive to experience the unknown. That's why we travel halfway across the world to experience new things. It's why we gape at exotic dances and rituals, enjoy strange foods and flock to buy foreign technologies. All the while knowing that we'll soon be able to return home, to get back to our routine.

No two of us the same

I reason from the assumption that no two people are the same. Everyone's unique. Sometimes we like this and sometimes we don't. Take your spouse: it can be great fun when he or she thinks of doing something else than you had in mind, but it can also be incredibly irritating. If we're painfully honest, we like diversity most when it's a slight variation of ourselves. But truly different ideas, opinions and beliefs are generally experienced as a nuisance. Particularly when they question our world view, our behavior, our beliefs and lifestyle. Diversity can rock the boat, and differences can be painful. That prompts us to fight and build walls. Sometimes that is necessary. But most of the time, it isn't.

Diversity creates excitement, opportunities, challenges and problems. A lack of diversity encourages routine, convenience and coasting, but not innovation or change. Dynamism and creativity are usually the result of contact and clashes between groups of people and cultures. Without them, we'd be stagnant. Cultures adopt each other's skills, concepts, frames of reference, foods, music, language and religion. New ideas are both tempting and threatening. 'Imported' innovation often calls up resistance and anxiety about the group's existing identity. Fresh ideas can reinforce a group's cohesion, but can also disrupt it and cause conflict.

*'The only people
we can think of
as normal are
those we don't
know very well.'*
– Alain de Botton

Diversity and inclusion. Why? Just because!

Many organizations keep returning to the question whether diversity is demonstrably 'better'.

Business case upon business case is written to determine whether the organization needs to explicitly address diversity and inclusion. These debates are often dominated by an incumbent, homogenous group that shares many characteristics with the typical majority.

In Western Europe, this means: speaker of the national language with no detectable accent, white, well-educated, male, not openly religious, member of the upper-middle or upper class. This group typically doesn't see the problem. To them, everything is going just fine. It's all about quality, right? Anyone who's really motivated can elbow their way into the group and in the long run, we will automatically become more diverse anyway. This book is full of reasons why that group is wrong. We need to stop questioning whether diversity and inclusion are necessary and profitable. That's procrastination and an (unconscious) smokescreen intended to avoid discomfort and to justify inaction.

I will enumerate four reasons for changing this mindset, in the hope that this makes it easier to do so. I've come across these reasons in all kinds of discussions I've been part of, and in memos, mission statements and vision statements I've read. Which of these ring a bell? Which ones would people in your workplace recognize?

1 Diversity and inclusion: because of the times we live in

The world keeps changing faster and faster. The pace is picking up because of globalization. Because of the internet we can reach the farthest corners of the earth. We take numerous flights every year and human migration is increasingly common. We retire later, change jobs more often and work with people of all different generations. We need to process more information of increasing complexity. All of us need to acquire a growing diversity of skills to meet the demands of our jobs and society. Everywhere you look, we need thinkers and doers, innovators and conservators, superspecialists and generalists. We're better equipped to do business in China if one or more of our employees is Chinese. A post-merger transition will only succeed if it includes people from all the countries and disciplines involved. In short, diversity is coming at us from all sides. Those of us who insist on staying in our own, little cocoon are quickly losing relevance.

And let's not forget that we're facing huge, complicated problems that affect the entire planet. The issues are no longer familiar-sounding variations on a theme. They're not square 2D puzzles. Our problems are dynamic 3D puzzles with missing pieces. Cause and effect are fuzzy. These issues are wicked, indeterminate, indefinite and tangled. Finding solutions to them will require us to cooperate with as many different people as possible. Climate change problems can't be solved by single countries, or even by the European Union. Same goes for the division between rich and poor, refugee crises and plastic pollution. We need to collaborate across cultural, financial, religious, political and geographical borders. The future requires us to be sustainable, diverse and agile. So, an inclusive mindset and inclusive skills are indispensable.

2 Diversity and inclusion: because it's social and fair

The fact that Ahmed is less likely to be hired than John is simply not fair. The fact that men are paid more than women for the same work isn't either. It's abhorrent that good-looking people have better chances of landing a job. It's shocking that someone in a wheelchair often can't get past the front door, literally speaking. And I could go on and on.

This unfairness is something people only begin to appreciate when confronted with it directly. The successful white male who thinks it's nonsense that Muslims face discrimination on the job market, suddenly sees the light when his own daughter marries a Moroccan man and he personally witnesses the prejudice. The same man realizes age discrimination is real when he's passed over for a promotion because he's too old and he notices others no longer take him seriously.

The topic of diversity tends to release a lot of energy, especially since it is linked to feelings of fairness. In some, it awakens their activist side, in others it evokes fatigue and an unwillingness to discuss the issue. After all, quality is the only thing that counts. Absolutely, quality is important and yes, you do want to feel that you click with someone. But the diversity debate has a direct bearing on this. Because who is the judge of what constitutes quality? Particularly when it comes to unquantifiable qualities like leadership and authority. Newcomers might not have a big local network, but they could well have other networks.

3 Diversity and inclusion: because it makes the pond bigger

In the *war for talent*, fishing outside your own pond is a great advantage, simply because it's a numbers game. Fishing in a larger pond increases your chances of finding what you're looking for. It enables you to adjust to an expected labor shortage. The risk of managing by numbers is that HR might be the only department that puts its best foot forward, while the rest of the organization never takes ownership of the pursuit of greater diversity. Newly hired 'minorities' will soon leave the company again. No one likes being hired as the token woman or person of color. Diversity should not become an HR hobby, while senior management complains about the quotas used and laments that hiring is no longer based on quality and talent. In short, everyone needs to agree that promoting diversity goes hand in hand with seeking quality and upholding inclusion.

4 Diversity and inclusion: because it improves quality

The fourth reason why diversity and inclusion are indispensable is that research has proven over and over again that multiple insights, angles and networks improve quality. Let me cite a few of the many available studies: more women in senior positions is the key to economic growth (EU report, 2010); investment teams whose members are from diverse backgrounds perform dramatically better than homogenous teams (*Harvard Business Review*, August 2018); in complex disciplines like law, medicine, science and management, there is a positive correlation between the quality of the products and services delivered and the diversity of the professionals involved (NBER 2018 analysis in USA). Based on task-oriented thinking, diversity may not be the best solution for strict routine tasks, but how many jobs require just routine work these days? An organizational policy based on the idea that more diversity improves quality produces more synergy than a policy aimed at helping an organization to accurately reflect society's diversity in numbers. Under the former policy, diversity is no longer an HR hobby or a political correctness box to tick because teams and their leaders truly feel the need for more diversity in their group.

'Real equality will be achieved only when lazy, birdbrain women are also appointed in high-level positions.'
– Beatrice de Graaf

*“Equal rights
for others
doesn’t mean
fewer rights
for you. It’s not
a pie.”*
– source unknown

Many scholars and entrepreneurs say this century’s biggest challenge is to create synergy between different types of people, talents and skills. That’s why today’s management books are all about co-creation, scrum, agile, town halls, participation, and so on. It’s not just about gathering different types of people at the table; the trick is to keep them there.

Jam Cultures

This book is called *Jam Cultures* because dealing with diversity and striving for more inclusion always reminds me of what happens in jam sessions; musicians improvise while creating a melodious tune. To me, jamming means being open, hopeful and vulnerable and daring to take a shot in the dark. It requires you to be sure you’ve mastered your own instrument and that you can make it sound the way you want. It’s about continually practicing self-reflection and having the courage to take the first step, to stay open and show curiosity. Trusting the other and yourself. Dealing with the fear that the other won’t like what you’re doing. Improvising together with what you bring to the music, with what you have. In jam cultures, people know how to jam with differences.

Jamming can be scary and lonely when searching for flow and connection. It can be sheer heaven when it works. And sometimes, it doesn’t work. Then, you need to face the situation, accept it, and bide your time. Or take immediate action. Join in and at the same time, play your own tune. Truth *and* dare. That’s when the magic happens and you lift each other up.



ABOUT JITSKE KRAMER

Jitske Kramer travels all over the world to learn from traditional healers, leaders, surprising innovators and random strangers. She views the world and individual organizations through the eyes of an anthropologist. Her discipline, cultural anthropology, questions what it means to be a human being amidst other humans in organizational settings and beyond. In 2012, she introduced Deep Democracy in the Netherlands, where she and her Human Dimensions team provide training. Kramer is always looking for new ways to build strong tribes and reinforce mutual ties. She shares her knowledge with people in the world of organizational consultancy, collaboration and leadership by means of top-notch lectures and master classes. Her goal is to improve individual and group effectiveness and results (while also making the world a vastly more pleasant place to be). She trains people, so that we will never again have to hold meetings, but have lively and honest conversations instead. She captivates you with stories that create space for new ways of seeing and behaving. As her stories progress, what seemed normal to you becomes strange, and what was strange becomes familiar.

Jitske Kramer (1973). Corporate anthropologist. Public speaker. Entrepreneur. Facilitator. Founder of Human Dimensions. Trainer of the year 2013. Author of *Managing Cultural Dynamics*, *Deep Democracy – The wisdom of the minority*, *Wow! What a Difference!*, *Voodoo – A Journey to Find Yourself Through Ancient Rituals* and co-author of *The Corporate Tribe* (Management Book of the Year 2016, published in English, German, Russian, Dutch and Vietnamese) and *Building Tribes*. Kramer works in Dutch and English. For more information, see www.jitskekramer.com, www.humandimensions.nl, www.deepdemocracy.nl and www.jamcultures.nl



To solve complex problems, we need multiple angles and perspectives. And the courage to challenge our status quo by working with people who think differently.

Inclusion is about co-creation. About the courage to invite people from various backgrounds to the table and to listen to all views. It requires us to deal with opposing forces to reach the highest goals.

Inclusion is a hot topic. It is about who gets to decide on what we think is good or bad. It is about who can join and especially about who cannot. These are topics we don't discuss lightly. We need an energetic language to describe our mutual pains without insulting one another. This book presents that language.

In Jam Cultures, cooperation is seen as a jam session, a process in which people feel safe to express themselves and dare to harmonize with each other to create a better sound. Inclusion means working independently together.

Dealing with diversity and power dynamics in a constructive way is one of the greatest challenges of today. **It takes leadership with power and love. It is what makes good leaders great.**

'Diversity is about being invited to the party. Inclusion is about being asked to join in and dance.'

Vernā Myers

**DIFFERENCE
POWER
TRUTH
TRUST
COURAGE**

