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Embedded Diversity: A Critical Ethnographic Study of the Structural Tensions of Organizing Diversity

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EMBEDDED DIVERSITY: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE STRUCTURAL TENSIONS OF ORGANIZING DIVERSITY

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Lotte Holck

EMBEDDED DIVERSITY: A CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF THE STRUCTURAL TENSIONS OF ORGANIZING DIVERSITY

PhD School in Organisation and Management Studies

PhD Series 16.2015



COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

Embedded Diversity:

A critical ethnographic study of the structural tensions of organizing diversity

Lotte Holck

PhD dissertation submitted April 2015 to the Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies, Copenhagen Business School

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Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies

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PREFACE

This PhD is structured as an article-based dissertation. This means that it consists of a ‘frame’ and a collection of four separate articles that are written for publication in four separate journals. In addition, I have presented three of the articles in different forums albeit in a slightly different form.

Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 4 are introductory chapters drawing up the theoretical, empirical and methodological basis for this dissertation and deal with main research question and give an outline of the dissertation.

Chapter 5 ‘Identity, Diversity, and Diversity Management: On Theoretical Connections, Assumptions and Implications for Practice’, co-authored by Sara Louise Muhr and Florence Villeseche (Copenhagen Business School), has been accepted for publication in *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*.

Chapter 6 ‘From affirmative to transformative diversity management – On how the logics of the welfare model obstructs ethnic diversity in the Danish workforce’, co-authored by Sara Louise Muhr (Copenhagen Business School) was presented at ‘Equal is not enough’ Conference in Antwerp, Belgium February 5th 2015 in Section 3, Panel 7: Organising & Performing Diversity approaches. The article is currently under review in *Scandinavian Journal of Management*.

Chapter 7 ‘Unequal by structure’ was presented at EGOS in Rotterdam, Holland July 6th 2014, Stream 4: Critical Approaches to Organizing and Managing Diversity. The article is currently under review in the journal *Organization*.

Chapter 8 ‘Spatially embedded inequality: Exploring structure, agency, and ethnic minority strategies to navigate organizational opportunity structures’ was presented at the

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Conference in München, Germany June 2014 in stream 11: Making diversity work: Diversity climate as a possible panacea. The paper was awarded 'Paper of the stream'. It is currently under second review by invitation in the journal *Personnel Review*.

To integrate the different parts of the dissertation into a meaningful whole, the dissertation comprise of a shared synopsis that sets the scene for the study. The dissertation ends with a shared concluding discussion that outlines the main theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions and answers the main research question (chapter 9).

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Thanks to all at the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations at San Diego State University for hosting me half a year. Especially a warm thank to Prof. Amy Randel who was my main contact and supervisor while in San Diego, Prof. Lisa Kath for having me on board her masterclass in Organizational Behavior, and Prof. Beth Chung for discussing my work in progress. We still have to make a comparative article together! Thanks to Prof. Tita Grey and Andy Esparza for interesting talks on diversity work in American organizations. And Thanks to Prof. Karen Ashcraft and her colleagues for inviting me to present my work at the Department of Communication at Boulder University, Colorado.

Warm thanks to my opponents at WIP I: Anette Risberg and Martin Kornberger, and WIP II: Dr. Mustafa Özbilgin and Sine Nørholm Just. Thank you for engaging with my work

and showing me new paths to follow. And a warm greeting to Laurence Romani for inspiring talks and future prospects beyond the PhD study. I also have to give deep thanks to all the members of the Diversity@CBS for support and interest. This also goes for all the members of the HRM group at IOA for sharing their knowledge and making me feel like a HRM scholar too. Thanks to the international diversity community that I have the privilege to consider myself a part of. All the researchers who have read and commented on my work and inspired me with their own at international conferences: Equal is not Enough 2015, EGOS 2014, EDI 2014, Sustainability in a Scandinavian Context 2013 and several Diversity conferences and workshops at CBS in 2013-14.

Last but not least thanks to my patient family: Thomas, Bjørk, Sophus, Jeppe, Vincent and Leonard. Thanks for making our stay in San Diego utterly memorable. Thanks to my parents, my sibling, their kids and all my loving friends for interest, help and comfort along the way.

1. INTRODUCTION

This dissertation consists of a collection of articles aimed at critically exploring how diversity and its management are organized in two Danish organizations. The articles are based on a critical ethnographic study of the links among diversity, diversity management and the structural setting, including the greater historical-societal structures, the organizations' structural setup and their spatial structures. Throughout the dissertation, I focus on how this structural setting simultaneously enables and constrains the local organization of diversity. This structural focus also grants the possibility to explore how structural conditions facilitate or restrain employee agency, and enables me to suggest locally relevant and progressive ways of organizing diversity. In this chapter, I provide a detailed introduction to the topic of organizing diversity and position my study within contemporary diversity research. In addition, I introduce the case organizations and the main research question, and I outline this study's contributions. I end the chapter with an overview of the rest of the dissertation.

The setting

Ethnic diversity is increasing on the Danish labor market. However, citizens with minority background are often employed in positions for which they are overqualified. These minorities are overrepresented in low-skilled and temporary jobs, underrepresented in management positions, and more likely than members of the majority ethnic group to face unemployment (e.g., Andersen et al., 2015; Ejrnæs, 2006, 2012; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Rennison, 2009; Siim, 2013). These macro trends tend to reflect the micro situation evident in organizations – even those organizations committed to egalitarian values and diversity (Acker, 2006, 2012; Boxenbaum, 2006; Holck & Muhr, 2015; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Larsen, 2011; Rennison, 2009; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008; Siim, 2013; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Van den Brink et al., 2010).

In the Danish labor market in general and in specific organizations, ethnic minorities suffer from structural inequalities of misrecognition and maldistribution, a trend initially recognized Fraser (1998; Fraser & Honneth, 2003). In terms of misrecognition, minorities experience a lack of acknowledgement of their professional skills and abilities in the labor market, and they are often forced to take jobs characterized by little possibility of advancement (status impairment). This leads to maldistribution, as minorities fill low-paid or even unpaid jobs in the lowest echelons of the organizational hierarchy, at least when they first enter the labor market (class impairment). Therefore, the organization of diversity is not only than a matter of ensuring recognition by promoting the status of minority employees in the organization (i.e., valuing a broad variety of competencies and identities). It is also a matter of compensating for the inequalities between the majority and minorities in the organizational hierarchy, which reflect the broader societal significance of class and deeply rooted, enduring stratification (Noon, 2010; Prasad, 2006; Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006; Zanoni, 2011). The combination of misrecognition and maldistribution restricts minorities' opportunities to participate on par with their fellow citizens (Acker, 2006; Berrey, 2014; Crowley, 2014; Fraser, 1998; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014).

In this dissertation, I use the terms 'diversity' and 'workforce diversity' to refer to *ethnic diversity* among employees in an organizations. 'Diversity management' is defined as the policies, activities and practices that relate to the management of ethnic diversity among employees. Such policies are typically articulated by human resource (HR) officers and managers. This 'ethnification' of diversity reflects the ongoing political and business debate in Denmark in which diversity and its management are linked to the efficient and progressive integration of an increasingly ethnically diverse labor force at the organizational level (see Chapter 2).

Workforce diversity at the organizational level is often neutrally referred to as ‘the composition of work units (work group, organization, occupation, establishment or firm) in terms of the cultural or demographic characteristics that are salient and symbolically meaningful in the relationships among group members.’ (DiTomaso et al., 2007: 474) However, I interpret ‘salient and symbolically meaningful’ in relation to dynamics of power. In other words, what Mamman et al. (2012) refer to as a ‘low status minority’ can apply to any category of employee, irrespective of such elements as gender, ethnicity, nation, sexuality, physical ability, and other factors deemed relevant (Ashcraft, 2011). The salience or relevance of the *status* of any category of employees depends on the historical and societal setting (Mamman et al., 2012). In a Danish setting the term diversity management (in Danish ‘mangfoldighedsledelse’) is usually used for ethnic diversity, whereas gender, age, physical ability etc. are explicitly used when talking about ‘non-ethnic’ diversity. When I use the terms organizing diversity and diversity management, I also refer to ethnic diversity due to this Danish legacy (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holck 2013; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008). In addition when associating diversity with ethnic minorities, this is both a reference to the numerical representation in the organizations *and* to employees’ experiences of position in the organizational hierarchy in line with Mamman et al.’s (2012) argument.

This study is inspired by critical diversity research on race and gender, and has a critical, reformative aim (e.g., Acker, 2006, 2009, 2012; Ashcraft, 2001, 2006; 2011; Ahonen et al., 2014; Ariss et al., 2012; Calás et al., 2012; Calás & Smirchic, 1999; Litvin, 1997, 2002; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Mamman et al., 2012; Muhr & Salem, 2013; Nkomo, 1992; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Perriton, 2009; Siebers, 2009, 2010; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014; Zanoni, 2011; Zanoni & Janssen, 2004, 2007). However, my ambition is modest. I attempt to instantiate a small, local rebellion, or what

Alvesson and Willmott (1992) term ‘micro-emancipation’, by pragmatically intervening in local debates on diversity to illuminate oppressive, ‘dark’ practices in my case organizations. I do so by adopting a *critical ethnographic methodology*, which involves interventions and participative engagement when undertaking research as a means to prompt changes in the organizations under scrutiny. As a ‘tempered radical’ (Meyerson, 2001, Meyerson & Scully, 1995) my study has a dual agenda: *radical* to challenge status quo to advance an emancipatory agenda but *tempered* because I seek ‘moderation’ and collaboration (Jones & Stablein, 2006). In other words, I aim to help business and diversity objectives work in tandem. This involves adoption of a pragmatic approach of engaging with the concerns and problems raised by practitioners while exploring the potential for liberation through the critical-constructive questioning of current practices and ongoing discourse on diversity and its management (Spicer et al., 2009). Therefore, the intention of my research is to encourage collective reflection on more progressive and emancipatory ways of organizing diversity among organizational members and among the diversity-research community at large (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Bartunek, 2007; Deetz, 2008; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; King & Learmonth, 2015; Spicer et al., 2009).

I explore the micro-processes of organizational diversity in light of broader societal discourses and structural activities that target corporate diversity work. This entwinement of the greater societal structural properties and micro-relations at the corporate level can be grasped through the concept of *embedded diversity*. ‘Embeddedness’ highlights the need to explore diversity processes in their localized and *situated* organizational settings, where they intersect with other everyday organizing processes. The fact that this study explores diversity processes *within* the organizational setting is one of its main contributions. This study analyzes both how 1) broader structural inequalities inform and affect local diversity

processes by conditioning the status, class and agency of (ethnic minority) employees, and 2) how diversity processes intersect and interact with the everyday performance of core organizational matters, such as task distribution and coordination (Vikkelsø, 2015). My intent is to tease out ways of remedying some of the local effects of larger structural inequalities by intervening in the practical reality of organizing diversity: to ‘actively search for new emancipating ways of organizing’ and ‘examine how inclusive organizational environments for minorities can be achieved through a variety of organizational practices beyond classical, HR diversity management initiatives’ (Zanoni et al., 2010: 19-20).

The purpose of exploring how diversity processes intersect and interact with the everyday performance of organizational core matters is related to a key term in the title: *organizing diversity*. In using the term ‘organizing diversity’, I distinguish my approach from conventional notions of diversity management. This is based on two main arguments. First, while diversity management refers to an *intentional* and *deliberate* set of managerial activities and practices aimed at increasing diversity in the workforce to promote amicable, productive working relationships (Jonsen et al., 2011), some of the (managerial) organizational practices that I scrutinize – the organization of the daily task distribution and performance monitoring (by means of lines of authority, collaborative patterns, personnel decisions, etc.) have *unintended* consequences for diversity relations. Such everyday organizing practices do not explicitly fall under the ‘diversity management’ label. As such I scrutinize how the interplay between the deliberate diversity management practices and their intended and unintended consequences, *and* the ordinary everyday organizing practices together make up the conditions enabling and constraining organizing diversity at organizational level. This area has received little attention in the extant diversity management research, which is predominantly occupied with deliberate

prescriptive and universal principles for managing diversity based on large-sale secondary data sources.

Second, my use of the term ‘organizing diversity’ reflects my ambition to move beyond conventional, generalized HR diversity management practices to suggest alternative diversity practices. When I write about organizing diversity, I refer to managerial and collegial practices that – intentionally or unintentionally – relate to employees’ ethnic backgrounds related to matters such as distribution of privilege and status in the organization. I discuss how these practices affect power relations, cooperation and socializing patterns, all of which are vital to the organization of daily work. At times, I also discuss ‘inclusion’, which is a way of actively valuing employee differences (such as demographic differences) and using them constructively in all aspects of organizational life – from business issues to the organizational climate (Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Shore et al., 2011). When I refer to ‘emancipatory organizations’, I include such matters as ‘classical’ structural considerations of power, like the re-distribution related to horizontal and vertical segregation. I also include the more conventional markers of ethnic equality advanced in the gender and diversity literature, such as valuing multiple forms of employee knowledge, skills and competencies, and accommodating multiple identities in the workplace instead of requiring assimilation into the dominant, majority culture (Acker, 2006, 2009; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007).

A final key term in the title is *structural tensions*, which refers to how the local organizing of diversity and its management gives rise to several structural tensions in the quest to redress structural micro-inequalities. In other words, I tackle the ambivalent notion of diversity in a societal frame that favors sameness, and in organizational settings in which the majority’s norms and competences are often viewed as the tacit standard, which affects

the distribution of tasks, promotions and collaborative patterns (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2014; Ariss et al., 2012; Klarsfeld et al., 2012; Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Siebers, 2010; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014; Verbeek & Groeneveld, 2012). In my articles, some of these structurally induced tensions and their intersections with the processes of organizing diversity are explored, guided by organizational theory on structure and form.

An empirically embedded study

The exploration of more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity was my ambition from the start, although my agenda has changed slightly over time. I originally set out to advance knowledge and understanding of how ‘best practice’ organizations in Denmark deal with diversity and its management. Prior to beginning my PhD, I worked as a diversity consultant. In that position, I dealt with diversity values, goals and practices in a wide variety of public and private Danish organizations. This work left me intrigued by the difficulties many Danish corporations encounter in their efforts to promote a diverse workforce. With the intention of identifying successful organizational practices of dealing with diversity, I chose two organizations renowned for their diversity work in terms of diversity in their workforces, their communication on diversity values and activities, and their public images. Both companies seemed to have found ways of successfully working with employee differences and, as such, offered fertile ground for the study of best practices in diversity management.

I initially believed that the decision to focus on a private organization and a public organization would enhance the relative generalizability of my research (Stake, 2013; Yin, 2013). However, over the course of my longitudinal ethnographic fieldwork, I understood that both organizations struggled with a wide array of diversity-related tensions and problems. Moreover, the continuous comparison and mirroring of the two case

organizations led me toward the intersection between the organizational structures that guided the daily performance of core organizational tasks and their ways of organizing diversity. In other words, my focus shifted towards how their structural setups created very different organizational spaces in which diversity processes could unfold. The comparison was limited by differences in the two organizations' structural aspects of core tasks, job functions, work processes and professional profiles, which created different patterns of motivation and collaboration in the two organizations. Nevertheless, I found the comparison compelling and interesting in relation to three key structural properties: the societal setting, the organizational setup, and spatial design and spatial routines.

Counter-intuitive and contradictory patterns in focus

My comparison of the two focal organizations over the course of two years highlighted a *counter-intuitive pattern*, which has significantly shaped the key concerns and tensions raised in my collection of articles. The machine-bureaucratic private Fastfood¹ progressively consolidated its position as a 'best' case for diversity management in Denmark through its diversity focus, high rates of employee satisfaction, and the employment of a relatively high number of women and ethnic minorities in leading positions. In contrast, the post-bureaucratic, team-based Agency was increasingly haunted by poor employee satisfaction, with almost 30% of its employees reporting experiences with harassment and bullying in the workplace, much of which was associated with such issues as language, skin color and ethnicity (employee satisfaction report, September 2014).

This counter-intuitive pattern contradicts most critical diversity research, which describes bureaucratically organized organizations, such as Fastfood, as the very incarnation of

¹ In order to protect the organizations' identities, all organization names have been changed.

inequality. The same stream of research suggests that post-bureaucratic, democratic and more collaborative organizations, such as Agency, should naturally advance more egalitarian ways of organizing diversity (see Acker, 2006; Crowley, 2014; Dai, 2014; D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Kalev et al., 2006; Konrad et al., 2005; Noon, 2007, 2010; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Prasad, 2006; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tran et al., 2010; Van den Brink et al., 2010; Van den Brink & Benschop, 2012; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004, 2007; Zanoni, 2011). A small but growing number of critical scholars question the idea that a collaborative, flat and informal organizational form *in itself* gives rise to equality through its structural setup alone (e.g., Meyer & Vallas, 2015; Ollilainen & Calasanti, 2007; Parsons et al., 2012; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014; Vallas, 2003; Varman & Chakrabarti, 2004). My intention is to generate a more open-minded approach to crafting emancipatory organizations that moves beyond the stylized typologies that dominate diversity scholarship. I suggest that practitioners and researchers must pay attention to the enabling and constraining features that every organizational structural setup may imbue (e.g., Ashcraft, 2001, 2006; Battilana & Lee, 2014; Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2013; Zanoni & Janssens, 2014).

The two case organizations do have some similarities. They are both service providers, and they embrace the same ambition of utilizing diversity to enhance organizational learning and the ability to serve a wide variety of customers (Thomas & Ely, 1996). However, the means by which they pursue these ambitions and their ways of organizing their diverse workforces differ. In fact, my observations indicate that their organizational setups, their ways of organizing core tasks and work flows, their means of coordination and control, their manner of dealing with their environments and organizational situations, and their spatial designs all significantly affect their ability to work with diversity. In an organization characterized by an free-seating open office space and an organic, flexible and team-based structure, like Agency, the organization of diversity *must* be different than

in the confined restaurant space of Fastfood, where people can walk in from the street and become a part of the team (no formal training needed). Agency is known for its knowledge-intensive, high-skilled creative milieu, member digression in task performance, and the fact that it undergoes constant change (mergers and restructuration) in a turbulent political environment, while Fastfood's work processes are organized assembly-line style in a machine bureaucracy that is coordinated by standard operating procedures for highly repetitive tasks. Employees are kept under the constant surveillance of a steep panoptic hierarchy of managers and colleagues (Courpasson & Clegg, 2006; Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004; Mintzberg, 1993).

This study explores these vastly different conditions, and how they affect, intersect with, and enable and constrain organizing diversity and its management. This study of diversity processes in the machine-bureaucratic Fastfood and the post-bureaucratic Agency highlights how certain aspects of the structural setup and ways of organizing work, tasks and lines of authority affect diversity processes. In addition, as most diversity research is conducted in low-skilled, large machine-bureaucratic service organizations, like Fastfood, more research in a wider variety of organization is needed (Ariss et al., 2012; Crowley, 2014; Mamman et al., 2012; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Zanoni et al., 2010). The relatively small organization Agency employs highly skilled, knowledgeable minority employees in a corporate landscape where ethnic minorities are often relegated to temporary, insecure and low-skilled jobs in the service sector, like those found in Fastfood (Ejrnæs, 2006, 2012). In this regard, exploring diversity in a small post-bureaucratic, knowledge-intensive organization like Agency can advance our knowledge of how other types of organizations can become more inclusive.²

² A survey from DI (Danish Industry) on 140 companies shows that while 44% of the companies with more than 1,000 employees work with diversity management, the corresponding figure is 5% for companies with 0 to 25 employees and 4% for companies with 26 to 49 employees (DIs Mangfoldighedsrapport, 2010).

Comparative analysis: the starting point

When I began to analyze diversity work in Agency, I was surprised by how the organization apparently struggled with relatively mundane diversity issues. For example, (predominantly ethnic minority) members had strong perceptions of a ‘glass ceiling’, ‘glass escalators’ and ‘glass cliffs’. Many of these perceptions related to issues of task distribution, participation in crucial decision making and advancement decisions (Acker, 2009; Ashcraft, 2012). They were combined with the embodiment of majority (white) profiles in high-prestige, advancement-prone positions, as well as cooperative patterns dominated by the attraction to or non-inclusion of certain ethnic profiles. I viewed these issues as mundane but significant, as they could ‘easily’ be resolved through the promotion of ethnic minority profiles, more transparent task distribution and advancement procedures, and difference-including, rotating cooperative patterns. I promoted such activities and changes while undertaking my intervention-based research in Agency, albeit with little success despite commitment from both employees and (middle-) management.

When diving into the reasons for this apparent resistance to change, it struck me that one of the keys to Agency’s pattern of micro-inequality was its structural setup, which was characterized by an opaque, informal, allegedly “structure-less” system of equivocal control and decision-making processes, and by continual change. This situation apparently drained employee resources and created multiple divisions that blocked the unity of efforts to, for example, embark on collective change. This manifested in an underlying ethnically minority/majority infused sub-structure, and socially constructed definitions and evaluations of what are usually neutrally termed ‘tasks’, ‘jobs’ and ‘competencies’ (Acker, 2006, 2012; Ashcraft, 2012). In addition, the organization’s diversity management policy was vague. It specified no diversity values apart from a policy of recruiting a workforce that corresponded to the municipality’s demographic composition.

These features of Agency were striking compared to Fastfood, which was first and foremost characterized by a diversity policy that regulates every aspect of dealing with employees. The organization seemed to work more skillfully and professionally with diversity. This was made possible by the transparency of the organization's meritocratic procedures and rules, which guide interaction. For example, the company had clear definitions of what it takes to perform, how many months of work were necessary to advance in the hierarchy, and how employees could position themselves for management training. This granted the organization a high degree of organizational transparency favoring feelings of fairness and organizational justice among employees. A significant contributor to members' perceptions of inclusion in Fastfood was the consistent and stable organizational setup, which made it relatively easy for all employees to navigate the organization regardless of their background, prior training or work experience. These structural features promoted a basic ontological security, characterized by a certain degree of predictability in the work processes and tasks. Moreover, they allowed for coordination of effort while reserving resources for tackling and embracing membership diversity (Barker, 1993; Ollilainen & Calasanti, 2007; Pederson & Muhr, 2014; Vallas, 2003; Van den Brink et al., 2010; Weick, 1979, 2001).

On the negative side, the rigidity of Fastfood's procedures, the organization's reliance on the principle of replicability and the high staff turnover curbed its ability to activate the unique skills of its diverse employees, thereby impeding employees' motivation and reducing their sense of professional dignity (Fleming & Study, 2011; Shore et al., 2011; Thoelen & Zanoni, 2012; Van Laer & Janssen, 2011, 2014). The conformity to a clearly defined, rigid concept of diversity – built up around a recognizable set of diversity values underpinned by corporate stories about adequately managing diversity – restrained the organization's ability to tap into the inherent potential to utilize diversity to trigger organizational learning. Agency's more responsive, open approach to diversity could

potentially activate a learning culture (Thomas & Ely, 1996), as the performance of various tasks was open to employee discretion and the creative utilization of multiple competencies, skills and experiences. Regardless, both organizational setups encompassed potential diversity-related tensions and possibilities, which are explored in this collection of articles.

Identifying shortcomings in contemporary diversity research

My observations from the comparison of the two organizations resonated with not only some of the tenets of the extant diversity literature but also some of its shortcomings. The most predominant of these is the general paucity of work assessing the aggregated structural aspects of the organizational setup, such as the spatial-material and historical-societal embeddedness, in relation to local corporate diversity work. In other words, studies of diversity processes situated within their organizational setting, are lacking.

Inequality and the precarious, marginalized position of ethnic minority employees in organizations dominated by majority norms and values are dominant themes among both critical and mainstream diversity management scholars. The extant research is dominated by two perspectives. On the one hand, organizational inequality is often analyzed through a discursive lens aimed at deconstructing diversity as a utilitarian managerial rhetoric. This stream focuses on minorities' experiences with discrimination (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2014; Ariss et al., 2012; Jack, et al., 2011; Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Jack & Westwood, 2006; Klarsfeld et al., 2012; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Siebers, 2010; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014; Verbeek & Groeneveld, 2012). Research in this vein may also center on the general societal discourse on immigration and on deconstructing the different elements of that discourse (e.g., Bendick et al., 2010; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Boxenbaum, 2006; Holvino & Kamp, 2009;

Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Larsen, 2011; Muhr & Salem, 2013; Omamovic, 2009, 2013; Rennison, 2009; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008; Rytter, 2007; Samaluk, 2014; Sieber, 2009, 2010; Siim, 2013; Tatli, 2011; Thoelen & Zanoni, 2012; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004).

On the other hand, positivist-inspired diversity management scholars mainly address the tenacity of organizational inequality in socio-psychological terms, often as the effect of (majority) prejudice. This research suggests that organizational inequality must be rectified through generalized and de-contextualized HRM practices, such as objective procedures, training and mentoring/network activities based on cognitive and individualized insights. Research into mainstream diversity management is mainly informed by the US positivist tradition (e.g., Ahmed, 2007; Ahonen et al., 2014; Barak, 2013; Dobbin et al., 2011; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Kossek et al., 2006; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Mamman et al., 2012; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Qin et al., 2014; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Shore et al., 2009, 2011; Williams & Mavin, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010).

These two major strands of diversity research play a vital role in documenting the persistence of status inequalities along ethnic (and gender) lines in the workplace. They are dominated by the social psychological perspective (organizational behavior studies), which acknowledges that contextual factors play a key role in triggering or diminishing exclusion/inclusion patterns. However, they mainly apply socio-psychological methods that do not adequately address these contextual factors. In fact, as these methods only address cognition, the roles of the more subtle power relations embedded in the structural-spatial setup and membership agency are downplayed, thereby ‘leaving organizational structures and routines which reproduce inequalities and normalize the privileges of the dominant group (e.g., white and male employers) unchanged’ (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014:

2; see also Acker, 2006, 2012; Ahonen et al., 2014; Belhoste & Monin, 2013; Benschop & Van den Brink, 2012; Boehm et al., 2013; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Holck, 2014a; Jonsen et al., 2011; Kalev et al., 2006; Meyer & Vallas, 2015; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tatli, 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Zanoni, 2011; Zanoni et al., 2010).

This brings us to the *first major shortcoming* of contemporary diversity research: the lack of contextualized, situated empirical investigations of diversity in organizational settings. This shortcoming is the result of the dominance of the discursive (critical) and generalized/abstract (diversity management) perspectives, which are predominantly informed by socio-psychological insights.

A *second major shortcoming* unites the critical and mainstream diversity management literature streams – a persistent focus on the barriers that ethnic minority workers experience rather than the agency that they deploy (Zanoni et al., 2010). In fact, few studies explore how a diverse workforce makes sense of diversity or experiences it. Instead, (top) managers and diversity officers are typically in focus (for exceptions, see, e.g., Ariss et al., 2012; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Minority agency are often ignored in terms of their everyday actions to bend, circumvent, strategically appropriate or resist unequal power relations by creating alternative organizational spaces of empowerment. This may serve as a valid starting point for the crafting of more emancipatory organizations.

This lack of focus on minority agency, along with the prominence of de-contextualized and generalized perspectives mainly informed by socio-psychological insights help explain why diversity research is generally viewed as unhelpful to diversity practitioners (Ariss et al., 2012; Jonsen et al., 2013; Jack & Lorbiecki, 2007; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Zanoni et al., 2010). In their comprehensive literature review on diversity research, Jonsen et al.

(2011) identify two gaps between the researcher and the practitioner. The first relates to levels of analysis – most diversity research has been conducted on the team and individual levels, rather than on the organizational level (DiTomaso et al., 2007). The second is linked to context – most diversity studies have been carried out in controlled, cross-sectional environments and have introduced artificial situations. These include, for example, lab studies using student samples (e.g., Stahl et al., 2010). Ivancevich and Gilbert (2000) report that most researchers remain outside the organizational flow and activities, and instead rely on archival data, surveys and secondary databases as primary data sources. These authors therefore conclude that researchers make too broad assumptions, and that they cannot capture the complexities or the fabric of organizational life.

This artificial, non-situated approach leads to a *third shortcoming* – the general paucity of empirical research based on experimentation, or on the curious, improvisational, playful and exciting use of active participative methods that give rise to relevant implications for organizational practitioners. Most research either provides generalized diversity management prescriptions that might seem irrelevant for practitioners and even prove counterproductive to resolving diversity-related problems, or takes the form of critical, deconstructive studies that fail to help practitioners or to bring about the progressive change that critical researchers preach (Ahonen et al., 2014; Alvesson & Spicer, 2012; Bartunek, 2007; King & Learmonth, 2015; Spicer et al., 2009). In particular, critical diversity research has thus far failed to articulate practical implications despite the crucial role played by practitioners in designing, implementing and monitoring diversity policies and practices (for exceptions, see Ahmed, 2007; Boxenbaum, 2006; Janssens & Zaroni, 2014; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Tatli, 2011; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2009). This is partly due to the inherent restraints of the critical perspective, which is limited by a predominantly deconstructive stance in which the researcher refrains from involving with a managerial, utilitarian and de-politicized perspective of mainstream diversity management that has

hitherto informed diversity practitioners (Bartunek, 2007; Cunliffe, 2003; Holck et al., forthcoming; King & Learmonth, 2015; Spicer et al., 2009). However, this distancing or disdain for management as a practice may result in a reluctance to take a strong stance or undertake empirical experiments. Indeed, while critical work has considerably enriched debates about diversity and inequality in organizations, such scholarship must directly engage with practice if it is to fulfill its emancipatory aspirations.

These three shortcomings – and the empirical puzzles arising from my initial comparison of the two case organizations – call for experimental and situated empirical investigations of diversity in the organizational setting. I respond to this call with critical ethnographic studies theoretically informed by a fusion of diversity research with organizational theory on structure and form. My intention is to situate and contextualize organizational diversity practices and problems, as they only become meaningful when interpreted as embedded in their organizational setting. In this regard, I join the group of diversity scholars who critically examine the intersection between micro-structure oriented research dealing with the organizational setup and the organizing diversity. This group is predominantly made up of feminist organizational scholars and sociologists exploring inequality in organizations (e.g., Acker, 1990, 2006, 2012; Ashcraft, 2001, 2006, 2012; Benschop & Van den Brink, 2012; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Calás & Smircich, 1999; Crowley, 2014; Dai, 2014; D'Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2013; Due Billing, 2005; Ferguson 1984; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Kalev, 2009; Martin, 1990; Meyer & Vallas, 2015; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Meyerson & Scully, 1995; Meyerson, 2001; Muhr, 2014; Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Ollilainen & Calasanti, 2007; Omamovic, 2009; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Parsons et al., 2012; Risberg & Just, 2014; Śliwa & Johansson, 2014; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2007; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tatli, 2011; Vallas, 2003; Vallas & Cummings 2014; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007; Zanoni, 2011).

Main research question

This study aims to address the three identified shortcomings of the extant critical and mainstream diversity management research: (1) a de-contextualized and generalized approach to diversity and its management, including a shortage of empirical investigations of diversity in its organizational setting; (2) an insufficient focus on minority agency (how minorities make sense of and enact diversity) and opportunities for individual agency to alter unfavorable organization structures; and (3) the lack of experimental, engaged fieldwork aimed at helping practitioners develop more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity. These shortcomings, which are the *raison d'être* for this research, are all reflexively explored in an empirically grounded, analysis of the organization of diversity in the two case organizations. Given this background, I ask my main research question:

How do the greater historical-societal setting, the organizational setup and spatial structures both enable and constrain organizing diversity in the two case organizations, and what are the implications for the management of diversity and employee agency?

This research question focuses on the links among the structural setting, including the broader social-historical structures, the organizational structure, the spatial structure and spatial routines, and diversity and its management in the two case organizations. I focus on how the structural setting intersects with the local organization of diversity. More specifically, I explore how structural conditions facilitate or restrain employees' micro-agency, and I use that analysis to suggest locally relevant implications for practice. Through critical ethnographic organizational grounded research, I highlight empirical contradictions and counterintuitive patterns while addressing the shortcomings of contemporary diversity research. This participative, immersive method allows me to explore alternative and experimenting ways of empirically investigating diversity in its

organizational setting. Furthermore, intervention-based methods enable me to engage in diversity related processes and give back to the case organizations while uncovering implications that are relevant for the local practitioners.

Specific elements of the main research questions are answered in the collection of articles that constitute the dissertation. However, the main research question is dealt with in the concluding section, in which I draw on the findings extracted from the four explorative articles. In addition, my conclusions reflect on the benefits and drawbacks of applying situated, active ethnographic research methods to organizational diversity, and on implications for practitioners.

Contribution

My main contribution lies in the fact that I redress the abovementioned shortcomings by transcending the boundaries of a social-psychological approach in which atomized individuals in a de-contextualized setting serve as the unit of analysis. This allows me to demonstrate how interpretations of diversity-related problems and the development of practical solutions must be grounded in a sound assessment and understanding of the structural and personnel conditions in the organization under scrutiny.

First, I adopt an organizational-sociological approach to diversity. This allows me to explore how the greater societal-historical structures affect the production and reproduction of (ethnic) inequality at the corporate level. This approach addresses the call for diversity researchers to situate and contextualize their studies. I suggest that an approach sensitive to the broader social, cultural and historical structures within which the local organization of diversity is embedded will provide access to key insights into ways of influencing – and potentially challenging and transforming – the local diversity climate in favor of more emancipative practices (Ariss et al., 2012; Boehm et al., 2013; Ghorashi &

van Tilburg, 2006; Özbilgin et al., 2011; Tomlinson et al., 2013). Diversity practices only become meaningful when they are interpreted as responses to and reflections of greater structural circumstances. They do not arise in a vacuum but are path-dependent and situated in time and space (Tatli, 2011). I adopt this approach in the second article, which is entitled ‘From affirmative to transformative diversity management – On how the logics of the welfare model obstruct ethnic diversity in the Danish workforce’.

Second, I trace the role played by the formal trappings of organizational set-up and spatial structures by uncovering how organizational structures repress or constrain the diversity that manifests in structural inequality. I do so by studying how inequality is structurally embedded in post-bureaucratic features of adaptability and informality. However, I do not attempt to promote any ‘one best way’ of organizing diversity. Instead, I suggest a complexity-sensitive conceptualization of organizing diversity in which the degree of structure is situationally adjusted to the need for emancipative practices. As such, my aim is to highlight the need to expand the scope of diversity research to include a situated, structural approach that moves beyond stylized typologies. In addition, I argue that diversity researchers and practitioners must pay more attention to the constraining and enabling potentialities of every organizational structure and form. This approach is adopted in the third article, which is entitled ‘Unequal by structure’.

I further more explore the structural dimension of space that is often not granted much attention within diversity research. I argue that a focus on spatial structures and employee spatial practices can grant insights into the more tacit and subtle working of power, privilege and disadvantage in an organizational setting aligned with Acker’s (2006, 2011) notion of substructures of inequality. Such a perspective can help to account for the tenacity of inequality – even in organizations committed to values of equality and diversity. This is dealt with in article four, which is entitled ‘Spatially embedded

inequality: Exploring structure, agency, and ethnic minority strategies to navigate organizational opportunity structures’.

Third, article four also investigates how minority employees as agents, rather than passive receptacles of control, engage in more or less compliant behaviors that may create space for their own micro-emancipation and, thereby, lead to more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity. In this perspective, minority employees are viewed as reflexive agents capable of acting upon the structural conditions they face (Ariss et al., 2012; Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014). Although this might seem contradictory to my structural perspective, it serves to emphasize organizational structure as both a product of agency and productive of agency. The two are entwined, such that a focus on organizational structures necessitates a focus on agency (Archer, 2003; Giddens, 1984).

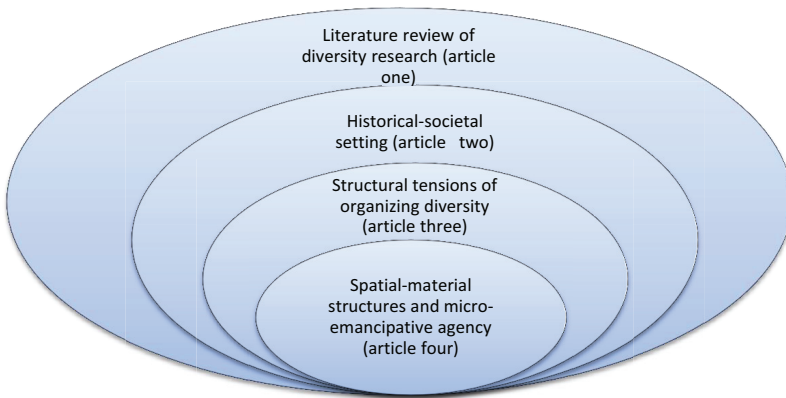
Finally, I make a methodological contribution, as I explore the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing intervention-based critical ethnography for studies of diversity in the organizational setting. Critical ethnography rests on the researchers’ active engagement in the organization under scrutiny. It allows for experimental fieldwork and enables the researcher to suggest practical implications. These implications can be affirmative, as they involve suggestions for practical solutions to issues raised by organizational members. They can simultaneously be subversive, as the researcher critically engages with organizational members by problematizing ways of organizing diversity. In this manner, the researcher attempts to change the terms of the debate on the long term (King & Learmonth, 2015).

Outline of the dissertation

This PhD dissertation is a collection of articles. This means that the dissertation consists of two main parts; first a synopsis (chapter 1-4 + 9) containing chapters that each focus on particular aspects of the study as is usually the case in the monograph format; and second, four analytical chapters (chapter 5-7) comprising journal articles in various stages of the publication process. Given this format I grant that some repetition appears in the dissertation which is a byproduct of the chosen form.

Figure 1 illustrates the outline of my dissertation. It is a so-called multi-level analysis assessing the entwinement and interplay between micro and macro with the organization level as the analytical point of departure and focal point of attention. Theoretically these levels will be explored theoretically informed by organizational-sociological theory on structure, form, space and agency, and then research on main-stream diversity management and critical diversity research. Moreover the analysis is grounded in an empirical analysis of two case organizations by means of intervention-based critical ethnographic study, dealt with in chapter four.

Figure 1: An embedded study of diversity in the organizational setting



Even though the articles are presented as single-case studies, they nevertheless originally emerged from, and are based on a comparison between the two case organizations. The comparison has mainly been used as a method to create empirical puzzlements to trigger the different topics under scrutiny in the articles (apart from article one which is a literature review). The comparison is not documented in the articles favoring the clarity of argumentation and depth of data by only involving one organization. The articles are presented as single-case studies to deepen and unfold the enabling and constraining aspects of structure in relation to organizing diversity at organizational level. For each article I have chosen to explore a particular topic of interest arising from a comparison; in this regards I have selected the case organization that most vigorously pinpoints the puzzle or striking feature arising from the comparison. The research has been split up in separate articles dealing with particular structural features. However, this is out of analytical considerations: a main insight from doing this research is that studying embedded diversity involves bringing all the structural aspect into consideration *simultaneously* drawing up a fine grained and highly complex organizational landscape in which diversity processes and practices are nested. Interesting aspects of the comparison in relation to the answer of my main research question will be included in the concluding discussion of this synopsis.

Chapter one is the present introduction to the dissertation. In chapter two ‘Research on diversity and its management’ I position my study within diversity research at large drawing up the polarized two main strands of respectively critical research and more mainstream diversity management, and in a Danish context. The purpose of this chapter is to further explore and ground the shortcoming of current diversity research identified above. This chapter draws on and supplement the literature review article presented in chapter five ‘Article one: Identity, diversity and diversity management. On theoretical connections, assumptions and implications for practice’. Overlap between these two

chapters cannot be avoided as both chapters contain a literature review of diversity research, but I intend to show very distinct aspects of the research literature: Chapter five (Article one) draws up the frontiers of research of diversity and its management by examining the relationship between the identity and diversity literature. This is done to discuss how a better understanding of the theoretical connections between the two can inform both diversity research and diversity practitioners. Chapter two provides an overview of what diversity research is about by describing predominant streams of research existing within the field. This is done to show distinct and competing theoretical positions of what we talk about when we talk about diversity and its management in organizations, and to demonstrate how my approach both challenges and adds to these predominant strands of diversity research.

Chapter three ‘To study embedded diversity’ provides the wider structural framework for the study. Here I present the main theoretical concepts apart from diversity: First the structural-agency relation drawing in particular on Archer’s approach (1982, 1996, 2003), and then organizational theory on structure and form in particular informed med contingency theory as coined by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967, 1986). This provides the theoretical lens to analyze and explore diversity within a structurally informed organizational framework. Again the theoretical considerations partly overlap with discussion in respectively chapter five, six and seven. But more importantly this chapter informs and positions the three empirically grounded articles (article two, three and four) to illustrate *why* their combination is important and compelling to thoroughly explore distinct level and layers of embedded diversity that *matters* when inquiring to understanding what goes on when organizing diversity at company level.

In chapter four ‘Method and research sites’ I present the methods of data collection and analysis, and I describe the process through which the study’s theoretical and

methodological development emerged. I focus on critical ethnography as a method to ask new, different questions to diversity as a research field and as an organizational phenomenon – with implications for practice. This chapter also contains a detailed presentation of my two case organizations to thoroughly embed the study's observations and derivations about diversity practices in respectively Agency and Fastfood. I reflect on the techniques of data generation especially the use of interventions. This method gives rich insights but also have research drawbacks, as I illustrate in two vignettes on the different research methods applied leading to unexpected and counter-intuitive results. Finally I discuss the ethical challenges of prompting change and challenging the organization of diversity while studying the very same practices.

In chapter five, six, seven and eight, I present the three main analytical chapters in the form of journal articles. As mentioned in the preface, the articles are in different stages of preparation for publication. More importantly, the articles are presented as independent contributions to diversity research as each of them raises distinct questions, connects to different bodies of literature, and employs distinct analytical concepts. Each article contains a theoretical contribution while three of articles additionally contain an empirical contribution – to the field of diversity. Together with methodological contribution dealt with in chapter 4 on participative engagement, each article contains the main contribution of this dissertation.

In chapter five is the article 'Identity, diversity and diversity management: On theoretical connections, assumptions and implications for practice' co-authored by Sara Louise Muhr and Florence Villeseche. This article has a theoretical contribution and provides valuable insights into the theoretical connections between identity and diversity literature that have so far not been reviewed systematically. Our work foregrounds how important it is for diversity scholars to consider identity underpinnings of diversity research to help further

develop the field within and beyond the three streams discussed in the article. Secondly this article underlines the adequacy of my approach of bridging and bringing together mainstream and critical diversity research. This is to promote a stronger engagement with practice and to critically but constructively approach more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity.

In chapter six is the article ‘From affirmative to transformative diversity management – On how the Logics of the Welfare Model Obstructs Ethnic Diversity in the Danish Workforce’ co-authored by Sara Louise Muhr. The article inquires the structural properties of the particular Danish variant of diversity management and how it has informed and impacted (obstructed) corporate diversity practices. It is explored how two predominant logics of the welfare model i.e. equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility impede corporate diversity practices. The logics of equality and solidarity are then traced in Fastfood’s employees’ narratives on diversity, and in their simultaneous pressure on ethnic minority employees to assimilate together with a devaluation of their skills and competences. This evidently works against the logic of valuing differences derived from the original diversity management concept. The article contributes to the call for explorative, situated diversity research and assesses the dilemma of sameness-difference as a core concern when organizing diversity.

In chapter seven is the article ‘Unequal by structure’. The article inquires how the organizational structural setup constrains diversity work. Drawing on an ethnographic study undertaken in Agency, this study analyzes how disparity is structurally embedded in the post-bureaucratic, collaborative form: In Agency, diversity is constrained by structural tensions of (1) escalating differentiation of adaptability which challenges integration efforts of coordination; and (2) integration methods in the double structure of formal and informal hierarchy manifesting in peer competition and informal elites. This exploration of

the constraining aspect of organizational form is meant to shed light on new more progressive ways organizing diversity. The aim is to explore how this is *not* a matter of organizational form *per se*; every organizational structure potentially both enables and constrains the organizing of diversity.

In chapter eight, I present the article ‘Spatially embedded inequality: Exploring structure, agency, and ethnic minority strategies to navigate organizational opportunity structures’ This article explores how a spatial-material lens on organizing diversity in the case organization Agency can uncover more subtle patterns of substructures of inequality: The analysis explore how members’ spatial appropriation of the organizational space are power relations enacted in the zoning of the work space, in patterns of distribution of privilege and embodiment of tasks, which stabilizes and make durable the patterns of inclusion and exclusion. However, the spatial structure simultaneously enables minority members’ micro-emancipative agency to challenge and reform current diversity practices. Finally this article aims to sensitize HR practitioners to the situated quality of diversity management and to appropriate broader diversity management practices to address structural inclusion of all organizational members.

These four analyses presented in the four articles all connect to and illustrate the breadth and scope of the title: ‘Embedded diversity: An ethnographic study of the structural tensions of organizing diversity’. The title reflects how the scholarly enterprise of this dissertation is to study embedded diversity by bringing all the structural aspect into consideration *simultaneously* drawing up a fine grained and highly complex organizational landscape in which diversity processes and practices are nested. In addition, how uncovering this embeddedness of diversity is preferentially done by means of intervention-based ethnographic research embedded in the empirical organizational setting. In chapter nine I will tie together the different analysis and approaches to empirically studying

diversity in its organizational setting to answer the main research question. These different contributions will together complete the quest to add to contemporary diversity research in order to theoretically and empirically explore more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity.

2. RESEACH ON DIVERSITY AND ITS MANAGEMENT

This chapter contextualizes the identified shortcoming of contemporary diversity research to which this study responds i.e. the lack of contextualizing and empirically situating diversity research in its organizational setting, to explore minority agency and suggest relevant implications for practice. As this dissertation includes a literature review (article one) in this chapter I will concentrate on positioning and clarifying my contribution to contemporary diversity research based on my empirical findings. I first trace the history of diversity management and draw up some of the main tensions within the research field i.e. the rationale of social justice vs the business case; and the division between an individualized or group-based approach to identity categories to frame differences. Then I go on to clarify the particular Danish variant of diversity management fused with corporate social responsibility, and how this involves incorporating not only issues of recognition and status but redistribution and class in diversity research.

Diversity research between diversity management and critical research

Diversity management originates from North America. It was launched in the 1980s and rooted in the anti-discrimination movement of the 1960s. Fuelled by the Workforce 2000 report on changing demography of US labor force, it later refocused on stressing the ‘business case’ of successfully integrating an increasingly diverse labor force (Jonsen et al., 2011)³. Diversity entered the management discourse with a critical distance to its predecessor Affirmative Action (AA) and Equal Employment Opportunities (EEO) advocating a legal focus (the late 1960s and early 1970s cf. Holvino and Kamp, 2009). As

³ For decades the diversity debate in US has been focused on legislative issues such as affirmative action (AA) referring to hiring quotas designed to increase the proportion of employees from minority groups typically to make up for past discriminative hiring practices. Or equal employment opportunities (EEO) which are policies guaranteeing access to job interview and more broad development and qualifications initiatives. This is also what Benschop and Van den Brink (2012) call quota strategies/regulations targeting defined disadvantaged groups which they contrast to post-equity experiments targeting the whole organization in a ‘persistent campaign of incremental changes that discovers and destroys the deeply embedded roots of discrimination’ (Meyerson & Fletcher 2000: 128).

Jonsen et al. (2011) argue while AA and EEO activities were seen to reduce the negative effect of exclusion and social stratification (on the labor market and in the corporations) then diversity management should pave the way for managing differences proactively by promoting the positive effects of inclusion within the organization (Jonsen et al., 2011).

While AA/EEO represented a legal and moral, social justice imperative, diversity management employed the rationale of competitive advantage, human resource utilization, and the business imperative to enhance organizational productivity and profitability with a focus on discretion and voluntary action on behalf of the corporations (Cox, 1995; Herring & Henderson, 2012; Kalev, 2009; Noon, 2007; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Thomas & Ely, 1995). AA and EEO programs of the 60s, 70s and early 80s had according to scholars proved insufficient (Kalev et al., 2006; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Muttarak et al., 2013; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Shore et al., 2009), in their failure to achieve enhanced organizational inclusion of minorities presumably due to insufficient involvement and commitment by managers (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010). Diversity management was then to provide a powerful set of argument by means of the ‘business case’ for diversity with which to persuade and mobilize management interests in the needs of the marginalized minority labor (Kandola & Fullerton, 1994). The business case is based on the idea that a diverse workforce can be a valuable asset for organizations if correctly managed, presenting diversity management as a way to value unique competences of a diverse workforce and to create a win-win situation for employer and employees (Thomas & Ely, 1996; Zanoni, 2011).

Business case or social justice

The ‘managerialist’ diversity management proponents of the ‘business case’ and the critical diversity advocating social justice have hitherto polarized the field of diversity

research and created two strong strands. The shift from AA and EEO to diversity management implied a move from legislative commitment to voluntary company initiatives – a way for companies to be proactive and take control instead of reactively applying to a legal framework (Loerbiecki & Jack, 2000; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). The business case fuelled a more voluntary and discretionary approach to diversity making it easier to link to business strategies and innovation in firms the employee differences. The shift also implied a move beyond the discrimination and equality debate and away from group-based differences and inter-group inequalities, to a focus on the attribute of individuals – and adopted because it made business sense in an increasingly ethno-cultural and globalized economy (Jonsen et al., 2011; Klarsfeld, 2012; Kelly & Dobbin, 1998; Noon, 2007; Tatli et al., 2012).

The frontier then polarized along on the one side, mainstream diversity management scholars promoting a broad set of individualized differences including all conceivable elements like personality traits, physical characteristics, and cognitive capacities in addition to the traditional ‘big five’ (ethnicity, gender, age, physical ability, religion and later on sexual orientation cf. Ashcraft, 2011; Thomas & Ely, 1996). On the other, the business case keeps critical diversity scholars busy deconstructing the very same as managerial rhetoric serving to conceal the widespread realities of unequal power relations along socio-demographic identity axes manifest in i.e. enduring wage and promotion inequality in organizations (Ahonen et al, 2014; Embrick, 2011; Kalev, 2009; Kalev et al., 2006; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Oswick & Noon, 2014). They perceive the showcasing of the business case as corporate efforts to push the question of power aside (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013).

This individualization of differences is combined with a focus on explicit and measurable aspects of diversity backing up the business case rhetoric of how diversity pays off

(Embrick, 2011: 545). According to Embrick, the increasing vagueness of the definition of diversity with the broadening of the term, also becomes a minimization or neglect of issues pertaining to racial/ethnicity or gender diversity:

By increasing the number of categories of people that fall under the umbrella of diversity, companies are able to effectively escape close examination of racial and gender inequalities that might occur in their workplace. As long as no one brings it up, it can be ignored...The diversity ideology emerged in the late 1960s that has helped corporations become increasingly sophisticated in their ability to portray themselves as supporters of racial and gender equality, while simultaneously they make no real substantial changes in their policies and practices to create real changes in the racial and gender composition of their workplace. (Embrick 2011:544-5).

The business case aims at demonstrating diversity as a strategic asset of the business focusing on the uniqueness potential of different members, while sidestepping the inequality and power dimension of the organization. However, the minority groups are still predominantly perceived as *different* from those representing the norm; and ‘classified and categorized’ according to race, ethnicity, gender, and age and to a lesser degree class, sexual preferences, education and disabilities (Risberg & Söderberg, 2008: 427).

The difficulties of grappling with the issue of ‘valuing difference’, and the tendency to combine ‘difference’ with otherwise marginalized groups on the labor market has led to a critique of diversity management as reinforcing stereotypes of especially ethnic minorities and women in a corporate setting (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010). The calculative dimension of the diversity business case also brings along a representative logic of ‘counting’ difference, which again can lead to stereotypical categorizations of employees and essentializing of difference. Others again criticize diversity management as a means to gloss over and ‘dissolve differences’ in pursuit of harmonious corporate integration and profitability by integrating a wider variety of

categories (Kamp & Holvino, 2009; Loerbiecki & Jack, 2009; Noon, 2007; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010).

The coexistence of inclinations to simultaneously dissolve and highlight, and to individualize and essentializing differences along social identity groups, brings together two conflicting logics when dealing with diversity both underpinning mainstream diversity management and the critical diversity research. The critical line of diversity literature has in particular focused on deconstructing and de-essentializing the notion of diversity to demonstrate how demographic categories and identities are not to be seen as static and fixed, but as socially constructs under constant redefinition, influenced by competing discourses and existing structures of power, and as varying according to the national/societal setting (Holck et al., forthcoming; Knoppers et al., 2014; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2009; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). The quest that underpins much critical diversity literature is to bring back in the question of *social justice*. This is done to ‘unmask’ power dynamics by illustrating how diversity management is a managerial practice of control by defining minority employees in fixed, essential groups with negative connotations (see also Boogaard & Roggeband 2009; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Litvin, 1997, 2002; Noon, 2007; Roberson, 2006; Roberson & Stevens, 2006; Simon & Oakes, 2006; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; 2011; Zanoni et al., 2010). Once categorized in essentialist stereotypical categories they are then more easily controlled and managed.

The two directions within diversity research point to how the act of intervening to craft a more egalitarian organization is navigating between the ‘Scylla and Charybdis’ of, on the one hand the use of essentialist ‘stereotypical’ demographic categories, and on the other individualistic, de-politicized categories (Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Noon, 2007; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). In practice this has led to an oscillation between

‘colorblind’ diversity policies in the quest to overcome resistance and then ‘identity conscious’ to further social justice (Holck et al., 2015; Tran et al., 2010). As Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) argue, without the recognition of salient differences that *matters in the context* organizational policies for change become too diffuse to tackle the sources of exclusion requiring urgent attention: While target group policies like AA and EEO make historically disadvantaged groups seem as ‘absolute others who needed to be helped and accommodated’, then the more individualized diversity management policies render them ‘invisible altogether’ (Ibid. 83). This highlights the difficulties of finding an adequate balanced method for the attention to a specific diversity category and yet avoiding the fixation.

This literature overview underscores some the identified shortcomings of a polarization between critical and main stream diversity research segmenting the research in silos: I argue that this is unfruitful when working to craft more emancipatory organizations – here practitioners could benefit from the attempt to align critical thinking with practical implications for scrutinizing local diversity related problems. What is more, the literature review demonstrates how both strands ‘suffer’ from a highly abstract and generalized research often times coupled with strong politicized standpoints around issues on matters such as essentialized/de-essentialized notions on identity associated with social justice or business imperative. Interestingly the same polarization do not manifest on practitioner level as the moral imperative of social justice can go hand in hand with the business case of enhanced performance. This is at least the situation in Denmark making up one of the characteristics of the particular Danish variant of diversity management.

WHEN A CONCEPT TRAVELS: DIVERSITY IN A DANISH SETTING

When a North American managerial concept like diversity management diffuses across the globe, it will be translated, dis-embedded and re-embedded to fit the receiving society (Boxenbaum, 2006). And for good reasons since some concepts might seem so foreign that they need a translation (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Waldorff et al., 2013); this is the case with diversity management as it stems from a totally different historical frame (a post-colonial society) and draws on a business logic of valuing differences that not hitherto has been dominant in Denmark (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holvino, 2008; Hübinette, 2011; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Kamp & Holvino, 2009; Muhr, 2012; Risberg & Søderberg, 2008; Romani et al., forthcoming; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007).

Diversity management to put migrants to work

Diversity management was taken up in a particular socio-historical moment (at the beginning of this millennium), when Denmark had very little experience of immigration suddenly faced the prospect of becoming a multiethnic society (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holvino & Kamp, 2009). Denmark is characterized by a protective yet exclusive labor market in which mono-cultural organizations are the rule (Cox, 1991). The historical and current exclusion of (especially low-skilled) ethnic minorities from the labor market results from the unique combination of low-skilled historical migration, a highly protective labor legislation and high labor costs, and a generous welfare system as well as a national identity based on Danish language. By the end of the last millennium, approximately one third of the non-western residents in Denmark were unemployed, and progressive NGOs, business and political forces were alarmed. In this situation diversity management came in handy as the means to integrate ethnic minorities into the labor market⁴. The variant of

⁴ According to Danish Statics, in 2014 there are 653.031 citizens with immigrants and descendant background living in Denmark, out of which 140.000 are active on the labor market. The employment rate among immigrants and descendants peaked in 2008 with 57 % The

diversity management that eventually emerged that focused primarily on difference in terms of ethnicity, but was integrated with the strong discourse on ‘the social responsibility of the firm’ (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holck 2013; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008). Hence the term diversity management (in Danish ‘mangfoldighedsledelse’) is usually used for ethnic diversity, whereas gender, age and disability are explicitly used when talking about ‘non-ethnic’ diversity.

Danish Diversity management and social responsibility: taking care of the weak

The moral obligation of corporations to care about ‘vulnerable groups at the labor market’ is essentially a Danish discourse (Holck & Muhr, 2015; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Rennison, 2009; Romani et al., forthcoming). Social responsibility in Denmark is conceived of as the firms’ moral obligation to care about vulnerable groups at the labor market by recruiting and including them in the organization (Rennison, 2009; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008). A particular Danish variant has been coined integrating diversity with an inclusive labour market ideology prescribing that it is possible to tackle differences by being inclusive and tolerant, and by securing labour market access for marginalized groups including ethnic minorities (Boxenbaum, 2006; Hagedorn Rasmussen & Kamp, 2004; Holck, 2013a; Holvino & Kamp, 2009). The Danish variant of diversity management as fused with social responsibility supported by a tradition of active labour market policies; state subsidized active labour market measures such as language and training positions, flexible and light jobs, and protective employment positions especially targeting ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups⁵.

number has thus fallen by 35 %. In 2014 the employment rate was 49,9 % for ethnic minorities compared to an employment rate 73 % among citizens with ‘Danish origin’. Since 2008 the number of non-Western immigrants and descendants outside the labor force has increased by 39,600 – equivalent to an increase by 43 %.

⁵ Another supportive structure is a system of ‘Flexicurity’ making it easier for employers to sack people, but supplemented by a government policy providing support and training for the unemployed through public investment in human capital of the universal welfare state.

In organizations, the Danish collaborative model gives individuals at all levels a voice through collaborative HRM practices (what can be termed ‘collaborative diversity practices’) and the companies have developed their diversity policies and practices in relation to union constraint. This collaborative approach has a noticeable imprint of trade unions and Danish corporation are obliged to take into account the union channel (Gooderham et al., 2013: 164-165; Romani et al., forthcoming). This system of ‘collaborative HRM’ is supposed to simultaneously fulfil the needs of the firm and the needs of the employees in a harmonious way: A consensus-oriented approach co-ordinates the mutual expectations and goals which supposedly stimulates employee commitment and motivation.

This cooperative model draws on some of the same ethical values as those embedded in diversity, namely employee experience of fairness, job enrichment and employee participation promoting the satisfaction of belongingness needs of the employees following the inclusive organization model (Shore et al., 2011: 1265). But by the same token, the very same values can serve as a stumbling block for diversity work, as they embrace a tradition of consensus and equality of treatment suitable for a more homogeneous group of employees (ibid: 1276). As Boxenbaum (2007: 942) underlines, the dominant Nordic homogeneity including the values of equality and democratic principles, potentially conflict with the principles of diversity management (citing a diversity professional): ‘In a Danish context, we are used to a homogeneous society... you cannot talk about people being different, then you cannot talk about treating them differently... we are trained to “equalize”’.

Consequently diversity management in Denmark tends to position ethnic minorities as a weak group; a group in need of development in order to fit the labor market requirements defined by majority skills and capabilities as the standard (Holck & Muhr, 2015; Holvino

& Kamp 2009; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). Hence ethnic minorities are categorized as a group lacking adequate skills to be redressed by means of assimilation. This has led to a rather ambiguous translation of diversity management, which is furthered by the concepts' foreignness to a Danish business environment (see Boxenbaum, 2007; Campbell 2007; Holck, 2013; Omamovic, 2009; Vallentin & Murillo, 2012). The original North American focus on an individualized approach encourages difference and to treat employees differently. Simultaneously, it rests on a voluntary action of the corporation. In many ways, this clashes with the corporative collective aspect of the Danish labour market. The latter combines a general sensitivity to equal (homogeneous) treatment and strong negotiated collaborative economy (Holck & Muhr, 2015). Thus Danish corporations, when applying diversity management, have to navigate between collectivistic and individualistic aspirations, the Danish history of corporatism and a predominant societal discourse on equality, itself leaning on the universal welfare state model. These constraints, references and practices are in sharp contrast to the more individualistic and neo-liberal contribution of diversity management of a US conceptualization.

Diversity management in a Danish context is then less about capitalizing on and valuing human capital differences (a business imperative) but about eventually creating equal possibilities (a moral imperative); ethnic minorities are recruited because the corporations feel ethical committed to demonstrate their good corporate citizenship not to access valuable different competencies and skills held by minority candidates (Aguilera et al., 2007; Cambell, 2007). But the moral imperative is paradoxically combined with business case arguments: Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen (2004: 532) emphasize how diversity management in Denmark has evolved as 'a story of how to obtain both equality and business success; it depicts a win-win situation where these two perspectives are united.'

The particular Danish translation might not only be unfavorable: As Barmes and Ashtiany (2003:284) argue ‘paradoxically the business benefits of diversity may in fact depend on non-economic justifications being given space’. Merging the moral and business rationales through re-inscribing utilitarian arguments within organizational commitment to social justice is not an easy endeavor and challenges the Danish variant. Drawing on the core idea of corporate social responsibility that companies should align business and social goals (cf. Aguilera et al., 2007; Matten & Moon, 2008; Vallentin & Murillo, 2012; Vermaut & Zanoni, 2014), the simultaneous articulation of the contradiction between an instrumental business case for diversity and its emancipatory potential for minority employees might help push forward more equality-fostering diversity management practices in organizations; to bring in social justice not only by *recognizing* but also adequately rewarding differences through *redistributive* measures as equal pay and permanent, high status positions.

The minority voices and agency: Social justice and class

Social justice by means of both redistribution and recognition takes us back to Fraser’s (1998) and the omission of critical diversity scholars predominantly to frame difference as a matter of recognition and status while not giving attention to how to develop adequate means to rectify matters of redistribution and class (e.g. Acker, 2006, 2012; Berrey, 2014; Crowley, 2013, 2014; Holvino, 2010; Kalev, 2009; Kalev et al., 2006).

The dimension of class is aligned with and inscribed in notion of power and structure, in assessing how structural-contextual factors play a key role in triggering or diminishing exclusion/inclusion patterns. There are two predominant interpretations of class: *One* is conceptualizing class at the macro-level of society. Here citizens/individuals are grouped in different classes on the grounds of income, property and power and hence perceived as a specific type of social stratification (Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006; Zanoni, 2011). There is

generally a great resentment to use the concept of class associated with feudal societies: However, research underpins how economic inequality is escalating in Denmark and especially ethnic minorities with non-western background are prone to end up in the lower class due to lower activity rates, strong overrepresentation in unemployment, and jobs in low-income, insecure industries (Andersen et al., 2015; Ejrnæs, 2006, 2012)⁶. A *second* interpretation of class is within traditional labour process theory which critical diversity research on race and gender predominantly takes its outset in. This is grounded in perception of class as the exploitative relation between capital and labor resulting in their distinct positions in the capitalist mode of production (Zanoni, 2011). Drawing on classical Marxism the dimension of class inevitable brings in the aspects of conflict between the managerial/exploitive class attempting to control while the employees/exploited class tries to find ways to resist this control, to the fore of analysis; when talking class, conflict is always brewing and can surface at any time in the organization (Berrey, 2014; Crowley, 2014; Kalev, 2009). The concept of class challenges the picture of diversity as harmonious (especially prevalent within mainstream studies) as class emphasizes constraints and control rather than choice and legitimate authority in relation to managing minority employees (Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006).

In my analysis, bringing in a class dimension is a way to make explicit the power dynamics at stake when working with difference in organizations (Mamman et al., 2012); hence highlighting the inevitable majority/minority power relations intersecting with distinction between provisional/permanent staff associated with corporate social responsibility activities and the inclusive labor market model. Most mainstream diversity research implicitly assumes all members consider transformation to inclusion as a

⁶ In 2012 than one third (37, 3 %) of immigrants with non-Western were to be characterized as belonging to the lowest 'sub-class' while 0,6 % belongs to the upper class. Comparatively only 12,6 % with native Danish background are found in the lowest sub-class while 3,0 % are in the upper class (Andersen et al., 2015).

harmonious ‘win-win’ situation. This is questioned by proponents of critical diversity bringing up the aspect of power and resistance in group-related interests, distribution of privilege and struggles over scarce resources. Combining recognition/status with redistribution/class within a critical diversity perspective brings the more subtle power relation to the fore of the analysis: the micro-politics of manipulating distribution of privilege and status in favor of own interest, and struggles over scarce resources (Benschop & van den Brink, 2012; Daya, 2014; Dobusch, 2014; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2013; Qin et al., 2014; Van den Brink et al., 2010).

The combination of class and status combined with social justice (and the business case) can make a poignant entry of the mobilization of change in organizations to make them more inclusive and just places to work – which brings in the issue of agency (Scully & Blake-Beard, 2006). Agency can be seen as the individual’s power and influence to affect changes in their work-life which is permitted and legitimized in their position in the webs of social and economic relations (Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). The element of micro-emancipative agency inevitable involves a clarification of the structure-agency relations. In this study I propose a conceptualization where structure both enables and constrains agency as proposed by Giddens (1984) and Archer (1996, 2003, 1982/2010). This is obviously a structure-agency relation that is of main concern in relation to my main research question.

3. TO STUDY EMBEDDED DIVERSITY

The identified gaps in current diversity research i.e. the lack of contextualizing and empirically situating diversity research in its organizational setting, to explore employee agency and to suggest reformative but relevant implications for practice, necessitates a theoretical elaboration of on the link between structural circumstances and agency. This will help me answer my research question of how the structural setting is a negotiated reality that both enables and constrains organizing diversity. It will further more equip me to analytically confront the question of what it takes and when agents (including myself applying intervention-based research) are able to convert this negotiation in their own favor to challenge and elaborate the structural conditions, they then have to face. This section gives me the analytical tools to assess the relative stability/malleability of structures vis-à-vis agency: when can agents be transformative; involving specification of degrees of freedom – and when are they trapped into replication; specifying the stringency of constraints? (Archer, 1982: 231; Fleetwood, 2005; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Weick, 1979) Archer (1996, 2003, 1982/2010) theory on structure and agency explores the co-existence of creativity and constraint in relation to how organizational members make sense of and act out their lives within a range of organizational settings.

POSTIONING MY STUDY IN A STRUCTURE-AGENCY RELATION

The relationship between structure and agency has been articulated in many ways. One key debate is how structural-material conditions determine the extent to which agents are free to act as they wish (i.e. structural determinacy of e.g. Marxism). As a response to the emphasis on structural predetermination, Giddens (1979, 1984) attempted to re-assert the prominence of agency. In his analysis, agency and structure are intrinsically linked:

The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represented in duality.... Structural properties of social

systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they organize. Structure is not external to individuals ... it is in a sense more internal. (1984: 25)

Whether structural constraints are internal or external are debatable, but a helpful distinction can be drawn between internal or normative and external structural constraints: While normative/internal constraints are those we place upon ourselves and others in terms of cultural and social expectations (Tomlinson et al., 2013). Then external structures are elements such as education, social and economic resources in accounts of career success, pointing to the continued significance of 'remuneration, repute or representation – or 'class', 'status' and 'power'. (Archer 2007: 13). A helpful emphasis is that structures are always both constraining and enabling (Giddens, 1984: xvi); while some structure will enable certain organizational members others will be constrained by the very same.

However, Archer is critical of Giddens' preoccupation with the enabling aspects of structures together with his conflation of structure and agency. She goes on to argue, that the central notion of structuration fails to specify when there will be 'more voluntarism' or 'more determinism'. To Archer, Giddens puts way too much emphasis on agency and enabling structures, which she terms upward conflation claiming that 'institutions are what people produce, not what they confront – and have to grapple with.' (Archer, 1982: 463) According to Archer, Giddens' institutional recursiveness never reflects the durability of constraint. Exactly the durability of constraint is important to my study as structures of inequality at the labor market and in organizations seem less malleable, fluidly made and remade than what Giddens (1984) asserts. This links to methodological advantages of Archer's approach to structure-agency: The necessity to maintain an *analytical distinction* between structure and agency. Taking her outset in a critical perspective on Giddens' structuration theory, she argues that Giddens' conceptualization rests on a central conflation in the duality of structure and agency, making it difficult to analytically distinguish the two. Instead she proposes an 'analytical dualism': In order to display their dynamism, they

must be conceptualized analytically distinct. This she does through a focus on how structure always pre-exists agency, whilst their interaction either leads to structural reproduction or structural elaboration. This structure-agency relation she terms the morphogenetic circle (Archer, 1996). Her theory is based upon two fundamental principles: first that individuals are free to act but at the same time are (structurally) constrained in their actions; and second that individuals have some awareness of the structural conditions, opportunities and constraints, they face – grasped in the centrality of human reflexivity (Archer, 2003).

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY ON STRUCTURE AND FORM

The structure-agency relation has implications for my analysis of the organizational processes that produce and reproduce – or enable and constrain the organization of diversity. Agency is of major concern in my ambition to explore and identify ways to craft more emancipatory forms of organizing diversity. In this endeavor I take my outset in a particular segment or stand of Organizational theory – namely that on how organizational structure and form both enable and constrain employee action in a particular organizational context. Especially Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967, 1986) conceptualization of how organizational structure is a matter of continuous adjustment and negotiation among organizational agents is rewarding. They emphasize organizational structures as a measure of adequate differentiation to meet the demands of the organizational environment, which then has to be balanced-out with requisite integration ensuring the necessary unity of effort to coordinate a common organizational task – what organizing and organizations essentially is about (at least according to Barnard see Vikkelsø, 2015).

The debate over the organizational structure and form has been formative for organizational scholarship for decades. It dates back to classical organizational theory and is associated with the question of how much structure is beneficial for organizational

performance. From the initial discussion of scientific management to the later proponents of contingency theory, feminist bureaucracy, organizational ambidexterity and hybrid organizations, organizational structure has been perceived as a tool for controlling organizational output in response to more or less turbulent and unpredictable environments. This has led two archetypical organizational forms, most frequently referred to as the ‘mechanic’ and ‘organic’ (Burns & Stalker, 1961) or the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organization (e.g. Courpasson & Clegg, 2006; Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011; du Gay, 2000, 2011; Reed, 2011). Especially the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic forms are of interest to this study as they by and large incarnate my two case organizations and the two forms are used consistently throughout this dissertation.

Contingency thinking – at least the one proposed by Lawrence and Lorsch – does not operate with a static perception of organizing and organizations; quite the opposite with a key assumption of organizing as a dynamic process. However, contingency theory operates with a clear distinction between organization as an entity and its environment which actualizes the notion of context – while I operate with a much more relational approach to organizations characterized by blurred and amorphous boundaries between the organization and its environment actualizing the notion of situatedness.

Structure is according to Lawrence and Lorsch continuously (re)produced in members’ micro-interactions; ‘those aspects of behavior in organizations subject to pre-existing programs and controls’ (1967: 5). This echoes Archer’s analytical dualism of structure pre-existing agency. Structure per se has no inherent meaning; organizational structure is the building block of the organization and has the content and implication that we endow it with. Even though for instance the bureaucracy incorporates a rationalization imperative, it is still the mere means of organizing. However, structures bestow certain potentialities in organizational members’ actions: The kind of (organizational) structures we craft is not

indifferent, as they forcefully shape the possible actions and conventions of the organizational members. Structure gives direction and purpose by establishing regularities, anchor points, and organizational strongholds. Structure then creates continuity in organizational coexistence, constancy and coherence in an otherwise unstable world (Becker, 2004; Pederson & Muhr, 2014; Pentland et al., 2011, 2012).

The contingency school of the 1960s and 70s is based on the pragmatic principle of ‘no one best way of organizing’. Contingency proponents advocate that any organization must be structurally arranged and managed depending on a number of situational factors to be effective: ‘the essential requirements of an organization vary depending on the nature of the task, the environmental characteristics and the disposition of its members’ as proposed by Lawrence & Lorsch (1967). Hence an organization must be adapted to the world it is facing by means of differentiation of tasks and functions to adequately meet the needs and commands of a complex and changing environment. However, an increased differentiation is inevitable accompanied by a coordination problem. This requires the deployment of appropriate methods of requisite integration to coordinate the common purpose of the organization. The contingency thought is thus based on the balancing of two antagonistic structural principles; the necessity for both *appropriate differentiation* and *requisite integration* to efficiently coordinate the collective effort of performing a common, shared task according to the requirement of the environment.

The integration/differentiation pair has later on been supplemented by March’s principles of exploitation and exploration (1991), which also articulates the same need of a basic balance. Too much exploitation (repetition of what has worked until now) and the organization cannot renew itself. Too much exploration (incessantly exploring new paths to follow), and the organization will be overwhelmed by too many inputs accompanied by too little control, and an underdeveloped capacity to follow through hampering the ability

to achieve its core tasks (March, 1991). March also advocate that these are not mutually excluding principles but need coexist and be balanced in order to effectively organize the common organization purpose. March, together with Lawrence and Lorsch, and other protagonists of the contingency school like Burns and Stalker (1961), Galbraith (1971, 2014), and Mintzberg (depicting five archetypical but flexible organizational configurations, 1993), all contributed to the contingency thought by unfolding a dynamic approach to organizational structure; not as a crude ‘organigram’ but as a practical tool to tackle the organizational ‘situation at hand’ (du Gay & Vikkelsø, 2013, 2014).

The conventional wisdom within traditional contingency theory applying the maxim of ‘no one best way to organize’ (Galbraith, 2014), has led to both historical and contemporary proposals for different organizational forms tackling their inherent tensions of exploitation and exploration, and differentiation and integration: From adhocracies and matrix/project organizations (Mintzberg, 1993; Galbraith, 1973), over hybrid post- and feminist bureaucracies (Ashcraft, 2001, 2006; Clegg, 2011; Courpasson & Clegg, 2004; D’Enbeau & Buzzanell, 2009; Diefenbach & Sillince, 2011; Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004;), to heterarchies, social entrepreneurship and organizational ambidexterity (Battilana & Lee, 2014, 2010; Grohs et al., 2013; Jay, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013, 2010; Raisch et al., 2009; Smith, 2014; Stark, 2009). Instead of the conventional ‘subordination’ of competing goals, they all share a quest to make sense of and combine different organizational structural components in a sustainable fashion (Pache & Santos, 2013). For instance Ashcraft’s (2001, 2006) concept of a ‘feminist bureaucracy’ builds on the tensions between the bureaucratic and feminist collectivistic forms, which she finds advance organizational reflexivity on the impact of structure, and the efficient organization of core tasks. Drawing on the notion of ‘organized dissonance’, Ashcraft demonstrates how a strategic union of apparently incompatible features can have progressive outcome.

The main research question is inspired by ‘the use of dissonance’ when tempering of the tensions inherent in organizing diversity. In this endeavor Lawrence and Lorsch’s (1986: 161) structural notion of coordination through combining adequate differentiation and requisite integration to tackle inter- and intra-organizational complexity, is very useful:

Each of these techniques seems to carry with it a thrust in one of two directions – either toward greater order, systematization, routinization, and predictability, or towards greater openness, sharing, creativity, and individual initiative. One thrust is to tighten the organization; the other, to loosen it up.

Central to this thinking is that the balancing act does not rely on something that can be theoretically deduced as a matter of linear causality or metaphysically framed, echoed in the split between positivist diversity management literature, and then the critical diversity literature. In this perspective the organization of diversity is a ‘practical discipline focused upon the effective, efficient, and responsible arrangement and management of organizations.’ (du Gay & Vikkelsø, 2013: 256)

The balancing out of an increasing differentiation by means of enhanced integration seems like a valid approach to organizing diversity: Even more so, as this study argues that a diverse workforce increases the need for requisite integration. Apart from more conventional differentiation related to tasks, functions, sections and teams aimed at adjusting to environmental complexity, workforce diversity adds to the internal complexity related to such elements as e.g. ethnicity, gender, culture, language, personality, age, work experience and professional background (Ashcraft, 2011). Therefore, the escalating differentiation of the organization’s external (inter-organizational) and internal (intra-organizational) environments, brings about a need for a more varied set of integration methods to promote unity of effort:

Viable organization of the future will need to establish and integrate the work of organization units that can cope with even more varied sub-environments. The

differentiation of these units will be more extreme. Concurrently, the problems of integration will be more complex. Great ingenuity will be needed to evolve new kind of integrative methods. (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1986: 238)

Without requisite integration methods, the organization will slowly dissolve (Vikkelsø, 2015). Methods of requisite integration endow certain potentialities in organizational members' actions that bring about at least some degree of routinized, predictable actions – a predictability that helps employees pick a course of action for tackling situational complexity (Pentland et al., 2012).

Applying contingency thinking to organizing workforce diversity directs the attention towards a structural focus on coordination of effort by means of a set of varied integrative methods to tackle the implications of increasing (workforce) differentiation. As differentiation increases fuelled by different profiles in relation diversity composition of members, new and more advanced mechanisms and methods of integration have to be developed. It is exactly these seeds of differentiation and the necessary varied set of integration mechanisms in order to coordinate the common effort of the diverse organization that I explore in this dissertation. Hence contingency thinking can enrich diversity research, by exploring and nuancing the necessity of structurally embedded coordination mechanisms as there is 'no best way' but only local, situated albeit temporary solutions. These solutions necessitates a thorough organizational assessment in order to develop a 'good fit' between an organization's inner arrangement, its core tasks, the differentiated personal capacities and dispositions necessary to fulfill its purpose and meet the demands of the environment – complicated by an increasing intra-organizational differentiation of a diverse workforce.

Apart from a differentiation perspective, the aim of this research is also to advance the proposition of more nuanced, detailed, and situational-specific *integration mechanisms* in

my two case organizations; to adequately tackle the increasing differentiation fuelled their diverse workforce, performance of diverse tasks, in a structural, material, and temporal complex environment. This is not to promote another ‘Procrustean bed’ that instrumentally prescribes the ‘right’ way to tackle the organizing diversity. In this quest it is important not to lose sight of the fact that the when dealing with diversity, the organization still has to perform its core tasks and work towards a common purpose, as it is these core tasks that diversity related encounters and interactions center around. This advocates for bringing ‘work’ (back) into diversity research and hence to base it on a more thorough assessment of the organization in order to adequately ‘situate’ the organization of diversity (Vikkelsø, 2015).

Table 1 summarizes my approach to organizing diversity vis-à-vis critical and mainstream diversity management research.

Table 1: My approach to organizing diversity vis-à-vis critical diversity and mainstream diversity management

Position on diversity	Main assumption	Objective	Main concepts	Activities and methods	Main limitations
Critical diversity research Diversity as social justice Critical/reformist Socially indignant/Emancipatory organizations	Diversity as matter of recognition of historical group-based structural inequalities and their redistributive consequences (class and status)	To redress structural inequalities to ensure ethical equality and fairness	Diversity as social status/recognition of historically disadvantaged groups Social stratification, social class – labor process theory - and critical studies of race and gender Moral imperative and an inclusive labour market as the responsibility of business citizens Obligation/Human rights focus	AA/EEO, anti-discrimination legislation and quotas Post equity strategies targeting the sub-structures of power, hierarchy and the power to define norms and values	Distance to practice limited by a predominantly deconstructive stance whilst keeping away from the managerial, utilitarian and de-politicized perspective of mainstream diversity management. Refraining from helping practitioners and hence to bring on the progressive change that critical researchers preach
Mainstream diversity management Diversity as business case Realist/de-politicized Managerialism / utilitarian	Diversity as matter of recognition and valorizing of individual differences	To ensure optimal utilization of human capital and enhanced performance/profitability	Diversity as a wide variety of individual characteristic and traits to enhance performance Human capital utilization/Diversity management Business imperative and utilitarianism. Performance and growth Voluntarism/Market focus	Formal HRM procedures: Objective and predefined criteria for selection, development and retention Training Dedicated mentoring and network	Prescriptive and de-contextualized diversity management activities to alleviate minority experiences of disadvantage on the basis of cognitive and individualized insights to alter majority biased behavior. These prescriptions might seem irrelevant for practitioners and even prove counterproductive to solve local diversity related issues

Organizing diversity Diversity as social justice <i>and</i> business case Situated critical perspective based on empirically embedded research	Diversity as a matter of critically assessing local conditions for organizing diversity in more emancipatory ways	To ensure parity of participation for all employees in the organization	Diversity as a matter of social justice combining status/recognition and class/redistribution Appropriate differentiation and requisite integration in constant adjustment of structures to tackle organizing diversity Spatial-material properties manifesting micro-inequalities and triggering emancipatory agency	Critical assessment of how the greater historical-societal structures, the organizational setup and spatial structure enable and constrain organizing diversity Transparent procedures and collectively formulated principles that are enforceable and open to contest	Studying diversity in its empirical setting will only have limited implication predominantly for the local situation. Hence it will not lead to the grand revolution but point to aspects of repression in the local situation: The study illuminates some of the dark, repressive sides of organizing diversity and highlight possible routes to crafting more emancipatory organizations leading to a general leaning.
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4. METHOD AND RESEARCH SITES

So how do I develop an appropriate research strategy that can connect my main research question and my theory in a set of research methodologies that enable me; (1) to ask new and different questions to the diversity field to address the identified shortcomings i.e. the lack of contextualizing and situating diversity in its empirical, organizational setting? Furthermore I inquire how the structural setting enables and constrains organizing diversity in my two case organizations informed by theory of structure-agency and organizational theory on structure and form? (2) And how do I design a research template that allows me to engage with practitioners?

My answer to these two questions is to apply an engaging and participative methodology that further more allows me to bridge the ‘gap’ between theory and practice. These ambitions I combine in intervention-based critical ethnology (Duberley & Johnson, 2011; Madison, 2011; Watson, 2011). A *critical* reading of the organizational setting gives me the possibility to reveal deep structures of asymmetric relations of power and control, to invoke the moral imperative of critical research to try and shift the balance of power in organizations in favor of currently marginalized groups. *Ethnology* is characterized by a close relationship with the setting which gives me the possibility to actively but pragmatically *intervene* and engage in a progressive dialogue on diversity and its management in my two case organizations to encourage more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity (Alvesson et al., 2011; Benschop & Van den Brink, 2012; Fairhurst & Grant, 2010; Madison, 2011; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Nentwich, 2006; Risberg & Just, 2014; Spicer et al., 2009; Staunæs & Søndergaard, 2007).

My research can be positioned within the interpretative science: I do not postulate any kind of validity or fundamental truth – the empirical material is but my construction and stories of my experiences while in the field. This is why this methodological section is so

important as to create *transparency* into how the data that forms the basis of my analysis has been collected and constructed by me and my interaction with the organizations under scrutiny. According to Justesen and Mik-Meyer (2010), interpretive research addresses at least three criteria of quality: *First* a high degree of pellucidity when it comes to choice of research design and analytical methods applied to demonstrate the premises of the research. This is to give the readers a foundation on which to base their assessment of the study to account for a degree of trustworthiness and reliability. *Second* to demonstrate a diversity of methods in a compelling study that contributes with relevant and interesting knowledge in relation to a defined target group.

Third a criterion of reflexivity and to engage in self-critical interpretations of my own predispositions and assumptions – personally, theoretically or otherwise – related to my consistent effort to tease out alternative constructions and reinterpretations of my data (Alvesson et al., 2008, 2011) and in sharing these reflections with the reader (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010). Reflexivity is an ongoing process and accomplishment throughout the research process; not only to challenge conventional thinking and but also as ‘reflection in action’: ‘On-the-spot surfacing, criticizing, restructuring, and testing of intuitive understanding of experienced phenomena’ as reflexive conversation with participants in the organizational setting (Schön in Darmer & Thomsen, 2010: 485). This methodological section serves to elaborate on and live up to the three criteria for quality research within interpretative science as coined by Justesen and Mik-Meyer (2010).

Social constructivism and critical ethnography

To characterize the philosophical assumptions and foundations of all critical ethnographers is an impossible task. Nevertheless, most of the so-called critical ethnographers confess to doing ‘intensive empirical investigations of every day, lived cultural reality.’ (Foley, 2002: 472). These empirical investigations are often founded on a social constructivist

assumption that people make their social and cultural worlds at the same time these worlds make them (Gioia, 2003, 2006). Reality is not seen as some objectifiable truth waiting to be uncovered (through evidence-based positivistic scientific inquiry). Rather, there are multiple realities that compete for truth and legitimacy (Fairhurst & Grant, 2010: 174): such meanings are produced and reproduced on an ongoing basis creating ‘structures that are both stable and yet open to change as interactions evolve over time.’ Gioia argues that even though we act as if these structures are real it does not change ‘the fact that they are intersubjectively produced enterprises.’ (Gioia, 2003: 189) Social constructivist inspired research is then first and foremost a study of how we as actors actively construct a reality that we then have to cope with – exploring how things become socially constructed (Cunliffe, 2008; Robichaud et al., 2013). All cultural groups produce an intersubjective reality which is both ‘inherited’ and continually constructed and reconstructed as it is lived or practiced – echoing Archers morphogenetic circle (Archer, 1996). ‘It is a distinct, lived historical tradition ‘objectified’ through structuring practices (laws, public politics, cultural conventions).’ (Foley, 2002: 472). The reflexive researcher tap into this historical, socially constructed reality in a partial, provisional sense through experimental encounters with (organizational) members who live by these social constructions of reality that emerges in the moment (Cunliffe, 2008).

A social constructivist inspiration has implications for studying diversity in an organizational setting. A key assumption is that organizational structures are always in the making, and a matter of continuous enactment by reflexive agents. And so is diversity: a relational, emerging, negotiated, forever contested and ever shifting phenomenon that I only give a temporary, ‘snapshot’ description of in my research. It is demonstrative of how organizing of diversity was dealt with in that particular organization at a particular time and among a certain group of members. My findings would inevitable be different in another time and place depending on location, situation and composition of

participants/organizational employees. As such organizational structure and agency are closely entwined in a temporary ever emerging relation. In fact perceiving organizational actors as reflexive agents makes it impossible to operate with a linear causality as within realism. Instead structures are seen as enabling and constraining in relation to reflexive organizational members who can both sidestep or change their structural circumstances (Esmark et al., 2005). According to Czarniawska (2008: 6) constructivist organizational scholars then need to focus on the performative rather than the ostensive definitions of organizations; ‘how organizations are performed, not how they appear’.

Table 2 Ostensive and performative definitions of an organization (Czarniawska 2008: 7)

Ostensive Definitions	Performative definition
An organization is a distinctive unit with properties like those of physical objects (large, small integrated).	A definition of an organization arises from social perceptions that change with the context.
Actors act in an organization, which exists independently of their actions.	Actors constantly construct an organization through their actions and their interpretations of what they themselves and the others are doing.
Researchers can describe an organization better than the actors can.	Knowledge of an organization resides in the first place with the actors; observers may have knowledge about an organization, which does not result from any privileged access to reality.
There can be only one correct description of an organization.	There can be many descriptions of the same organization that can be compared according to pragmatic or esthetic criteria.
The purpose of the research is to formulate principles	The purpose of research is to capture and describe practices.

Table 2 illustrates the difference between an ostensive and performative perception of organizations: The left column follows the percepts of the natural sciences methodologies (realism), where organizations are seen as distinct objects and the researcher’s task is to

discover their attributes in order to formulate principles determining their formation. The right column illustrates the interpretative tradition of social constructivist studies based on the key assumption of organizations as (re-)constructed through actions that means enacted in and by actors and their interpretations of what they believe they – and their colleagues – are doing. Here the object of the study is to explore how organizations are constructed combined with capturing the complexity that characterizes their genesis; to describe their complexity and ambiguity with as many facets as possible (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

The objective of constructivist committed researchers are to describe practice not to prescribe principles for organizing (Czarniawska, 2008; Robichaud et al, 2013). As the organizational ‘reality’ is under permanently under construction, it makes no sense to look for ‘the essence’ in a stable, permanent form. This is why I refer to the verb organizing – underlining the processual and emerging aspect of the continuous construction of the social entity we call an organization (Czarniawska, 2008; Weick, 1979, 2001): filled with contradictory demands, ambiguous acts endowed with power and emotions. As such there is no causal linear link – but a transformative one – between input/gestures to manage diversity and then outcome/employee responses in the continuous emerging structuring process that we call an organization (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). This is what I grasp in structure as a matter of balancing integration and differentiation in an ever emerging form inspired by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967, 1986). Even though some position Lawrence and Lorsch within a realist realm, my use and interpretations of their work focus on their emphasis on differentiation and organizational structures as an ever emerging activity not committed any ‘one best way’ prescriptive principle for organizing.

Intervention-based critical ethnography

Critical ethnography rests on political-ethical and action-based philosophy that allows application of multiple and experimental fieldwork methods. *First*, ethnographic fieldwork

draws on a wide range of data-generation methods (Madison, 2011; van Maanen, 2011) to gain deep insight. Ethnography allows for long time immersion in the field which gives the time, sufficient insights and trust among participants to be able to give back valuable input to the organization under scrutiny. Long time immersion also allows the researcher to hear the polyphony of voices - including the minority voices – and not only top-management and HRM diversity officers. Immersion potentially allows for sensitivity whilst using the researchers body, feelings and emotions to sense how organizing processes unfolds ‘taking seriously one’s own experience’ as a researcher (Turner & Kristen, 2013).

Second it is a political-ethic stance to take when critically exploring organizational (diversity) processes. Critical theory has traditionally not emphasized empirically grounded research – but more abstract and generalized deconstruction ‘to describe, analyze and open to scrutiny otherwise hidden agendas, power centers and assumptions that inhibit, repress and constrain.’ (Thomas, 1993: 2) Most critical diversity scholars favor an etic position standing on the outside, pointing in and criticizing whilst refraining from engaging inspired by e.g. labor process theory, neo-Marxism, post-colonialism, and feminism (Ahonen et al., 2014; Alvesson et al., 2011; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Holck et al., forthcoming; Jack et al., 2011; Jones & Stablein, 2006; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012). However, there has been a growing interest in ethnographic studies informed by critical thinking to expose oppressive practices within organizations. What is more, interventions gives the ability to give back to the organization while in the field; there is a temporal dimension of presenting findings while they are still relevant, as they are activated in the flow of daily relating – potentially leading to more ‘practice relevant’ research (Alvesson et al., 2008; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Cunliffe, 2011; Davis, 2010; du Gay & Vikkelsø, 2013; Foley, 2002; Haynes, 2011; Hibbert et al. 2014; Learmonth et al., 2012; Mahadevan, 2011; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Michailova et al., 2014; Stacey & Griffin, 2005; Turner & Kristen, 2013; Wright, 2011). This might grant the biggest organizational impact and help

members in their primary occupation: To find practical solutions to their ‘here and now’ problems at hand. Giving back to the organization while doing fieldwork also has the additional benefit of ‘testing’ the relevance and reliability of the findings (Cunliffe, 2010), inquiring whether my findings and accounts of organizational practices have any resemblance to the organizational members.

From traditional to critical ethnography

Traditional organizational ethnography has been occupied with ‘getting out of the armchair’ to conduct participant-observer ethnography in the factories and office buildings, to understand work conditions as to improve them (Agar, 2010; Cunliffe, 2010; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Foley, 2000; Gertsen & Zølner, 2012; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Van Maanen, 1988, 2010, 2011; Zickar & Carter, 2010). Zickar and Carter’s (2010) position ethnographers either as reformists aiming to facilitate change, muckrakers who expose transgressive practices or voyeurs who observe situations to better understand them. Especially the reformist aiming to facilitate change echoes the *traditional* organizational ethnography of conducting participant-observer ethnography in the factories and office buildings to understand work conditions as to improve them. This is inspired by ethnographic classic work like the Chicago School of Sociology, the American tradition of Pragmatism, and in particular the Hawthorne Studies (Cunliffe, 2010; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Miettinen et al., 2009; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Van Maanen, 2010). The logic behind participative research is that intervening in the organizational system in order to change it as the appropriate method of understanding it, which echoes Lewin’s assertion that ‘you cannot understand a system until you try to change it’ (Weick & Quinn, 1999: 363).

As such my research is inspired by traditional organizational ethnography and its quest for emancipation, which according to Alvesson and Willmott (1992: 432) describes the

process ‘through which individuals and groups become freed from repressive social and ideological conditions, in particular those that place socially unnecessary restrictions upon the development and articulation of human consciousness.’ Ultimately the goal is to enable members of society to alter their ‘lives’ through self-knowledge and understanding of their social situation. But a softer version has been adopted as to enable individual and collective reflection and self-determination in organizations through what Alvesson and Willmott (1992) terms micro-emancipation. Micro-emancipation is characterized by incremental efforts through participatory processes drawing attention to the distribution of disadvantage and repressive power in the organization. Hence social relations are both the target and the means to facilitate piecemeal and partial movements that break away from diverse forms of oppression, ‘rather than successive moves towards a predetermined state of liberation’ (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992: 432).

With the ambition of facilitating micro-emancipation I break away from more passive forms of conducting ethnography rooted in observation with a primary focus on degree of descriptiveness in the writing (Van Maanen, 2011, 1996). A central characteristic of ethnographic writing is the ability to convey the sense of what can be known about organizing processes by ‘being there’; ‘being immersed in the situations, events, interactions, and so forth that provide the grist for the ethnographer’s knowledge claims mill’ (Miettinen et al, 2009: 1316). Ethnography is defined by Van Maanen (2011) as the result of the ethnographer’s efforts to describe what he or she experiences in immersive, lengthy participant observations in the field. This involves ‘thick descriptions’ focused on detailed empirical data as well as interpretive efforts that go beyond or beneath specific manifestations by interpreting layers of meaning (Van Maanen, 2011). Ethnography requires both immersion *and* translation of this experience so that it is meaningful to the reader (Cunliffe, 2010) – and the participants I must add.

The immersed and engaged research methods advocated by ethnography are also basic in critical ethnography; grounded in critical theory with a focus on discourse theory and language as a power tool to construct certain organizational version of 'reality' (Foley, 2002). Critical ethnographers aim to 'investigate the nature of hegemonic regimes of truth and how they impact upon the subjectivities and behaviour of the disempowered in contemporary organizational contexts' (Duberley & Johnsen, 2011: 348). There is then a moral imperative to engender democratic social relations and thereby shift the balance of power in organizations to the favor of currently marginalized groups (Foley, 2002; Madison, 2011; Thomas, 1993). The critical ethnographer thus differs from the conventional ethnographer in that apart from only portraying their informants' world view, they must challenge these in the attempt to reveal the deep structures that produce and maintain asymmetrical structures of power and control (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013). In that sense critical ethnography overcome the 'cynical distance' that has been the main criticism towards critical theory (Hartman, 2014): The very destructive footing in itself making it highly difficult to sketch out the kind of world that it might actually want'. (Spicer et al., 2009: 542)

Who am I? Reflexivity and critical ethnography

This past decade there has been an increasing awareness of the importance of self-reflexivity within organizational and critical ethnography through self-examination and accounts for the process (Alvesson et al., 2008, 2011; Cunliffe, 2003; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Hibbert et al., 2014) Critical scholars have a profound skepticism regarding the possibility of an objective and disinterested foundation for knowledge; the possibility for a methodologically engineering separation of 'the knower from what is known', which is pivotal to a positivist stance, is 'replaced by the view that all knowledge is socially constructed' (Duberley & Johnson, 2011: 345). In addition, the researcher do

not possess any kind of privileged knowledge of how the organization 'really work' (Madison, 2011). Instead research represents one among many interpretations and possible descriptions of the organization under scrutiny. Self-reflexivity is then the capacity to recognize that all accounts of organizations and management are mediated by the particular tradition of the authors which methodologically and epistemologically challenges the objectivism, neutrality and scientism pervading mainstream research (Alvesson et al. 2011; Fournier & Grey, 2000). As such both context and subjectivism - the researcher's process of interpretation – are vital part and parcel of the research process that has to be scrutinized through self-reflexivity. This contrasts realist commitments concerned with minimizing the subjective and contextual elements to uncover a research phenomenon as objective and neutral as possible - to grasp its essence (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2010).

The knowledge production within my research is accordingly a collective construct between researcher and the researched; i.e. the research subjects (i.e. organizational members) and the researcher (as a kind of participant) together construct and affect the research process (Ashcraft, 1999; Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013). As such my research subscribe to the belief that 'knowledge is not something that people possess in their heads, but rather, it is something that people do together' (Gergen, 1991: 270). Not only does this demand a reflexive stand on how this study is 'tainted' by the my position in a broader academic network and drawing on a certain academic schooling, that 'shape knowledge which means that the researcher can construct 'knowledge' only in the context of a particular research community and society (Alvesson et al., 2008, 2011). It also demands reflexivity on the researcher identity and the relation to the 'other'; the research subject. Reflexivity is a mean to interrogate my taken-for-granted experience by questioning my relations with my social world and the ways in which I account for my experiences in the course of writing up my research (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013). As such I

must recognize myself as part of the research project; a subject like any other that is constructed in and through the research (Alvesson et al. 2008). There is no ‘unprejudiced’ access to research. I am a co-constructor of the empirical construction on which I base my findings. I am influenced and changed by my interactions with the people I study as they are changed by my presence (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015).

Methodologically, this means that researchers need to explore researcher-researched or the self-other relationships of fieldwork together with self-critical awareness of my limits as interpreters (Foley, 2002; Fournier & Grey, 2000; Madison, 2011). Self-reflexivity is meant to question my own ways of being, relating and acting while doing research, and examining and unsettling the key assumptions consciously or subconsciously guiding my research (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013). My prior relation and cooperation with the case organizations, my background and academic schooling are all of importance to both the methods applied and the interpretations on which I base my findings. All of this relates intimately with my motivational background for doing this research. As mentioned in the introduction my primary initial motivation was to research best case diversity management practices. However, along the way my research included additional motivational inclinations as I required more knowledge of the shortcoming of diversity research and how this study could contribute to the field crystalizing in a reformative intention and an exploratory curiosity.

Reformative and affirmative research

The *reformative intention* is predominantly inspired by my professional background as a diversity consultant; I already knew the two case organizations in advance and had depicted their diversity work in popular folders on best practice examples of diversity management. On that occasion I had been giving advice on how to progress their diversity performance and we wanted to continue this cooperation with the intention to generate

more practical knowledge on ‘how to make diversity work’ (a very practical but also broad ambition). My consultant background gave me a particular approach and point of access to do research in relation to this study: Transforming from consultant to researcher gave me prior knowledge of the two case organizations as part of my ‘luggage’ together with prior reflections on which I based my research. My access point to the organizations (in Agency; a chief consultant and section manager, and in Fastfood; the head of and a diversity consultant in the HR department) and their motivation for cooperating with me together with our ongoing discussion of my findings ‘tainted’ my research questions, the methods applied and my subsequent interpretations of fieldwork data. As such the notion of co-constructed research is meaningful in my study. My consultant background also made intervention-based methods more straight forward and less disruptive when engaging with the two organizations. In fact the organizations entered the collaboration with the expectation of consultancy on my behalf and as a follow-up on our previous collaboration. But as a researcher, they allowed me to alternate between more or less passive observation/interview phases and then highly active roles of presenting findings and facilitating seminars.

My research is inspired by Spicer et al.’s (2009) notion of ‘critical performativity’ believing that research needs to have an element of new knowledge as well as to be practically oriented. Critical performativity involves active, subversive but also *affirmative* intervention into (management) discourse and practice, to move beyond the cynical distance that often pervades critical scholars. That is to recognize how critique must ‘involve an affirmative movement along-side the negative movement’ to create new more liberating ways of organizing (Spicer et al., 2009: 538).

Another major source of inspiration to the activist stance is Meyerson and Kolb’s (2000) seminal article on how to transform critical feminism of ‘armchair theorizing’ into active

research to prompt changes in organizations in favor of more gender equality. As a critical performative ‘out of the armchair’ researcher, I assumed the role of ‘bridge maker’ between critical interpretations – playing devil’s advocate – and then engaging in the practical problems and concerns raised by the participants as an empathetic partner. On the one hand I tried to refrain from ‘watering down’ research by insisting on a critical edge through asking troublesome questions and bringing participants into troublesome situations to trigger collective reflections on experiences related to status, hierarchy and power relations linked to issues of workforce diversity. On the other hand, I wanted to make my findings ‘digestible’ and practical to practitioners by relating them to concerns and problems raised by practitioners – and predominantly being critical when invited to. The method is to relate closely to every day practices ‘to locate points within the practices with liberating potential’ through critical-constructive questioning that expands the horizon (Spicer et al., 2009: 546). As such the critical researcher must be pragmatic towards the kind of change you can activate and have to settle on piecemeal, incremental local changes of micro-emancipation.

Explorative research as ‘tempered radical’

In my research I combine consultancy with research into a hybrid or hyphenated position of a consultant-researcher role (Czarniawska, 2001; Katisiafica et al., 2011). As Gertsen and Zølner (2012) argue this kind of collaborative approach seeks to bridge the alleged theory-practice gap which does not make the researcher’s job easier: A main challenge of collaborative research is to accommodate the different interests of the scholars on the one hand and practitioners on the other (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). While the latter is ‘likely to require practical insight and solutions to concrete problems, the academic community is more focused on methodological consistency, quality of data and theoretical relevance.’ (Zølner & Gertsen 2013: 2-3) The researcher looks for deeper theoretical and empirical

understanding of a social phenomenon, when the practitioners prefer something they can apply in their daily work; some kind of guidelines for action or the like. My approach was dialogic as I intervened to help to put words on problematic practices (Shotter, 2010): by participating aware of the local 'language' and priorities, and hence giving advice that was recognizable to the organizational practitioners (King & Learmonth, 2015). As such I applied to the virtue of prudence or practical wisdom (phronesis) to suggest solutions to the problem at hand involving the 'art of judgment' i.e. theoretically informed practical insight in what can be done in a given situation.

The dual agenda of exploring organizational alternatives to facilitate bottom-up changes combined with awareness of local practical concerns are core to tempered radicalism as proposed by Meyerson (2001). As a tempered radical, the researcher operates with a dual agenda of wanting to achieve a liberating change in the organization by adopting non-threatening more pragmatic change practices by minimizing explicit references to the 'radical rhetoric' of social indignation, justice and discrimination. As such my study can be seen as tempered radicalism with a dual agenda to advance equality and at the same time increase organizational effectivity – making business and social justice objectives work in tandem (Meyerson, 2001). My critical engagement involved suggesting small steps of micro-emancipation (like changing task distribution and collaborative practices in one section in Agency) or larger changes (more local freedom and space of maneuver for discretionary agency at restaurant level in Fastfood). However, most of my interventions were problematization of current practices by posing different kind of questions to target change of the terms of the debate; to trigger transformative agency on the long term (Hibbert & Cunliffe, 2013; Learmonth et al., 2012).

As a tempered radical, my dual agenda called for a collaborative research process which involved both critique and cooperation making critical ethnography an appropriate choice.

Collaborative research does not allow for a more passive or ‘objective’ way of researching diversity: In many ways I embodied an ‘other’ position: On the one hand, I was too engaged to assume a ‘non-biased’, objective stance and my proposals were not prescriptively ‘ready to implement’ to fit in among mainstream diversity management scholars. On the other, I required too ‘dirty hands’ as I proposed not only social justice promoting but also more managerial-utilitarian inspired changes in the organizations under scrutiny to fit among critical diversity scholars. This is *my methodological contribution* to the diversity field: to demonstrate the potentialities and drawbacks of doing empirically embedded diversity research *in situ* by means of critical ethnography and critical-pragmatic interventions as a consultant-researcher.

Before I go on to reflect more in-depth on the methods I have applied in my interventions informed by critical ethnography, I will draw up the two sites of research as well as my research design and methods applied in my two case organizations. This will give the necessary background information to critically assess the organizational implications of the methods I have used, the kind of impact my research have had on my case organizations as well as the ethical consequences of this kind of study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Ethnographic fieldwork draws on a wide range of data-generation methods (van Maanen, 2011) to gain deep insight. This allowed me to apply different, situationally ‘suitable’ data-generation techniques to acknowledge the two companies’ differences – hence reflecting the multi-methodological approach of critical ethnography to grasp the complexity of diversity activities and practices in my two case organizations. However, data generation predominantly fell into the categories of participant observations, semi-structured individual and group interviews, and interventions.

The study draws on an *iterative design* in which research questions are formulated and reformulated throughout the fieldwork phase, thereby creating space for empirical material to affect the research process and results. The fairly open approach meant that the researcher was not restricted to a rigid interview protocol. After an exploratory phase, findings and understandings from the initial observations and interviews in both of the companies were organized in emergent themes, which were then used as inputs in new interviews, both in terms of questions asked and in respondent selection. Therefore, the emerging understanding of the companies affected the lines of inquiry (Alvesson, 2010). Moreover, findings in one organization were mirrored and ‘tested’ in the other. Data analysis was guided by a constant comparative method in which intra- and inter-case differences and similarities in the two companies were highlighted in relation to consistencies and, in particular, variations in organizational practices. An iterative method was applied that oscillated between fieldwork observations and interviews, consulting theory, and data coding in order to condensate meaning, and generate new theoretical and empirical questions. When processing the data, the researcher translated the interviews into English. From field diaries, observations, interviews and interventions a number of significant events, telling experiences and ‘confessional tales’ (van Maanen, 2011; Zhang & Spicer, 2013) were constructed to exemplify how Agency’s and Fastfood’s structural setups intersected with organizing diversity.

The research sites

Agency

Agency is a municipal center that service local international businesses and entrepreneurs. The core tasks of Agency fall within advice-giving, courses for entrepreneurs and developing input to the municipal business profile through political/strategic work. It was founded in 2008 with eight employees. When this study’s fieldwork began in May 2012, it

had just been merged with another unit, moved to another department, and the number of employees had more than doubled from about 30 to 85 people. In September 2013, the center's size was cut down to 35 employees and an internal restructuration was initiated. It was never implemented as a municipal election (November 2013) brought about restructurations affecting Agency. By the time my fieldwork ended in May 2014, Agency was undergoing yet another merger doubling the size under a new name and department.

Agency successfully applies the municipal diversity and equality policy as staff composition reflects the composition of the municipality's citizens. In this regard, organizational members differ according to age, gender, ethnicity, language skills, and cultural experiences, and they vary from autodidact entrepreneurs over administrative to masters of predominantly political sciences and humanities. The culture evokes an entrepreneurial spirit in an open-plan office space, which is characterized by little formality and few rules. Managers have discretion in decisions on task allocation, promotion, recruitment, and members' participation in various tasks. But employees also have discretion when performing their specialized mostly project-based work in teams. The organization has historically been relatively small and informal with a flat hierarchy (at least so it is described by the employees) with a CEO and two to three middle managers according to the varying size.

The constant restructuration means that Agency is in constant 'identity crises. Hence the organization embarked on several identity processes during my fieldwork: First of all an 'organizational identity' formulation process involving a seminar for the whole center where diversity was formulated as one of the key values (December 2012). In addition, an external consultancy was hired to remedy the low employee satisfaction rates detected in continuous work environment reports. The process was called 'Attractive Workplace' and involved a process at managerial and later on organizational level with several seminars

(January to June 2013). Finally I was involved in several section seminars that I organized together with a group of employees and their section manager. This culminated in a two day workshop and three follow up meetings (March to July 2013).

Diversity policy

According to their homepage the strategic task of Agency is to: ‘... improve the service for entrepreneurs and business in the city, and make it easier for companies to get in touch with the right municipal staff.’ (webtext my translation) Diversity is not specifically mentioned on the website and in other official communication, but an annual report from 2011 mention ‘Culture and Diversity’, stating that Agency forms part of the city internationalization strategy and work to ‘... ensure the international branding of the city as open and tolerant where quality of life and growth are well-matched, providing advice, improving the framework conditions for businesses and enhancing the international competitiveness of the city.’ (My translation) Thus diversity has to a certain extent been translated as globalization and internationalization by Agency.

Where diversity is most evident is in the recruitment policy: From their instantiation in 2008 Agency has recruited with respect to diversity among its employees: The first eight employees were different according to ethnical background, working experiences and professional background. Some of these ‘veterans’ (their own wording) are still in the organization, most of them have a strong voice due to their experiences, history of shaping the organization and are often referred to as the carriers of culture. Officially Agency recruits directly on the basis of applicants’ qualifications, where language skills and international experience are qualifying as Agency strives to reflect the demographics of the citizens and customer base.

Most of the newly recruited employees in Agency are in temporary training positions due to the active labor market policy of the municipality assuring that the municipal entities live up to the corporate social responsibility preached when communicating with the local private business. The training positions are substituted financially by the government and can be a great opportunity in times of job shortage and youth unemployment, since highly skilled people will apply for these training positions at a very little cost while boosting the image of the Agency as social responsible and international in its profile. Hence differences within the employees are enhanced by different working contracts; a mix of permanent staff and temporary training position with respectively long and short time tenure.

My fieldwork in Agency

The bulk of the empirical data was collected during a nine-month period during which the researcher occupied a desk in Agency twice a week (November 2012-July 2013). My field work consists of four primary sources:

Ethnographic observations of participants made in multiple, routine meeting forums, such as center, department, team, and management meetings. In addition, a series of job interviews, two center workshops, and ad-hoc social gatherings were observed. These daily observations were reflected in a fieldwork diary that makes up a significant part of my data.

Open-ended interviews were guided by the initial participant-observations: This includes semi-structured interviews with 18 members (employees and managers lasting from 30 to 120 min.) asking participants to describe their perception of the working place in relation to the free seating situation, everyday spatial routines, the work culture, diversity and the cooperative environment including information sharing, distribution of tasks, decision-

making processes, and socializing etc. The interviews included visual methods as members were asked to draw maps of their spatial routines and seating habits. Open-ended interviews opened up for personal reflections, and the sharing of feelings on change, task distribution, and career patterns. All interviews were recorded.

Four 'core respondents': My long time fieldwork gave me the possibility to follow four employees closely. This includes job talks, development interviews, and continuous interview situations with me as well as in their everyday working situation cooperating with co-workers. I was engaged in continuous conversation with the four core respondent encouraged by their own wish for private talks and reflections during the course of my fieldwork. They are all anonymous and given other names. The case stories have great importance to my research since these stories weave in and out of my analysis. The case stories – together with significant incidents – are drawn upon in the quest for illustrating central paradoxes and dynamics when working with diversity in Agency. The core members were also used to record reflections during and after the intensive period of field work. I still regularly meet up with them outside their workplace.

Interventions The members took interest in the researcher as a 'cognizant outsider', and some even used the study as a warrant for action (Ashcraft, 1999). Interventions gave the possibility to test the reliability of data and the researchers' presumptions through presentations, seminars facilitated by the researcher, participation in debates, informal talks and reflections in response to members' requests, as well as two written reports. Interventions culminated in a three-day seminar and two concurrent follow-up seminars on collaborative patterns and inclusion in one section on their (the section management's) request. Most of the interventions were recorded.

This particular combination of methods offered insights into important aspects of organizing diversity in Agency. The participant observations and interventions provided insight into how members dealt with change, as well as an overview of how informality and blurred lines of authority affected cooperation and socialization patterns.

All the participants and the organization have been granted full anonymity. Appendix 1 shows an overview of my fieldwork in Agency.

Fastfood

Fastfood is multinational private restaurant chain that has restaurants all over Denmark and a main office consisting of communication, economic, administrative departments together with a HR office. It is the main office that has been my access point and main collaborative partner. Fastfood is a highly specialized and standardized production company with uniform global standards that apply locally in a formalized, centralized hierarchy and transparent personnel politics that spell out criteria for recruitment, promotion, and performance.

Fastfood is an officially recognized champion of diversity in Denmark and has won numerous awards and prizes on this account. Fastfood's focus on bottom-line gains rests on a strong belief that staff diversity improves earnings by allowing staff to acquire the skills needed to service diverse customers. The staff composition echoes this belief in relation to ethnicity and gender. For example, 16 % crew and 13 % managers have an ethnic minority background; 52 % crew and 49 % managers are women; and 2 % crew members are disabled. The exception in terms of diversity is age as 90 % of crew members are between 15 and 23 years old. Some employees have refugee, immigrant, or expatriate backgrounds, and the organization is frequently used to gain access the mainstream labor market (recognized by the organization's members as a 'rebound to society' function).

Diversity policy

Fastfood has officially a diversity policy that focus on bottom-line gains and the skills and knowledge that a diverse group of employees can contribute with. There is a strong belief that diversity among the staff equals higher earnings and improved service to a diverse group of customer. Many of Fastfood's diversity initiatives have been initiated bottom-up, as restaurant managers proactively have employed local marginalized labor: Local restaurants have employed physically and mentally handicapped, deaf and autistic people, young people with criminal background, long-term unemployed, school tired young, and crew with refugee and immigrant background in language training and internship schemes. All of the above mentioned groups are initially employed in wage subsidized schemes but many finally end up in permanent non-subsidized positions. These bottom-up strategies vary from area to areas according to the relation to the local municipal Job Center (unit coordinating initiatives to find work for local unemployed citizens). Some restaurants have been appointed local business center by the local municipal job center which implies continuous recruitment of local unemployed citizens in wage subsidized positions.

My fieldwork in Fastfood

In *Fastfood*, the research period covered two years (May 2011 to June 2013). In this period, the researcher was trained as a 'new employee' in seven restaurants, which allowed for participant observations and for semi-structured interviews during breaks with crew members and managers at different levels. In total, 30 such interviews were undertaken, each lasting from 15 to 45 min (June-September 2011). This fieldwork was commissioned by the HR office and resulted in a formal report.

In May to October 2012 the researcher made a survey of the relation between restaurant performance and management values and practices in 9 restaurants across Denmark. I was

thus allowed to supplement the interviews with questions on diversity. This study included 27 focal group interviews with respectively members of staff, middle-managers, and solo-interview with the restaurant managers lasting from 30 to 70 minutes (May-October 2012). All of the interviews from the two periods of fieldwork have been recorded and transcribed. I also made daily fieldwork diaries on my observations that make up a substantial part of my data.

Intervention The empirical data from the two fieldwork phases was processed in two reports on Fastfood's diversity practices and discussed at several meetings with headquarters' HR officers. A third report was made by an external researcher based on my fieldwork, reflecting the relation between management style and restaurant performance. All this data are utilized in this dissertation. My findings have also been conveyed through frequent meetings with the HR department. This was well-known by all participants and they were granted full anonymity.

This particular combination of methods gave me rich insight into three important aspects of organizing diversity in Fastfood. First, the participatory aspect of the fieldwork offered insights into how members dealt with the rigidity of monotonous, dull work through teamwork, socialization processes, and managers initiated games and contests to boost performance. Second, focal-group interviews gave access to information on group dynamics among and between staff and management teams. And third, individual interviews offered opportunities for critical, non-filtered personal experiences and stories.

REFLECIONS ON INTERVENTION-BASED RESEARCH

Use of case study and comparison

As mentioned in the introduction, the comparison between my two case organizations triggered my particular structural take on diversity. However, this is not a *conventional*

comparative study in order to postulate any kind of representativeness. The comparison is done to give permit greater understanding into the processes of organizing diversity in my two case organizations. The two case studies are used to reflect and served as a responsive frame or a resonant mask for each other. The key assumption was that observed actions and activities in one organization could serve as both as a template *and* as an antithesis for action to be tested in the other organization. The cases were to project and mirror each other. I did not replicate the same analysis in the two organizations: Taking into consideration their very different setup I embarked on very different ‘customized’ fieldwork methods to suit the two organizations – as illustrated above. The empirical data generated in the two case organizations varies in methods applied and their usability in the different analysis: The fieldwork in Agency has predominantly been collected over an intensive period of nine months (October 2012 to July 2013) in a non-planned way picking up on and creating events for doing interventions and following different cooperative processes. The empirical material from Fastfood has been created in a more structured and planned way with several ‘impact points’ conducting different specified investigations: The material created have been used for several purposes in Fastfood apart from serving as my empirical material.

The comparison is fundamental to my analysis and forms the basis of the three empirical articles. As mentioned above, the articles are presented as single-case studies and the comparative aspects are not documented in the articles – but they have nevertheless triggered the idea behind and object of analysis in the articles. Originally the articles were founded on a comparison where one set of data eventually has been removed. I use the prevalent features of the one case as a mirror that are being displaced or projected into the study of the other case organization – highlighting, provoking and alienating aspects of the other case. With this approach I hope to advance a more complex and multifaceted understanding of diversity and the organizational processes that underpin this

phenomenon. The comparison was also actively used within the field: I used examples from the other organization to reflect and inspire. Phenomena of surprise, wonderment and significance in the one organization served as points of departures for collective reflections on particular phenomena in the other organization. Thus the one case is used as a mirror, as an opposite or antithesis and as a source of inspiration in the other case organization when in the field.

I draw on collective case study, in which more cases are involved either due to their similarity or difference (Stakes, 2013). The case organizations were originally chosen on the basis of diversity considerations: They represent the private and public sphere; one is knowledge intensive while the one is a production company. They both employ a wide variety of employees: While Fastfood predominantly employs marginalized labor that face difficulties entering the 'ordinary' labor market, then Agency employs highly skilled and specialized employees. They have different justifications for hiring a diverse group of employees: Fastfood is primarily motivated by the cost of labor to keep expenses low, and marginalized (with wage subsidies) as well as young groups of employees are cost efficient. Moreover diversity among the employees creates a positive company image internationally and externally to countervail an otherwise 'tainted' public image in regards to their products. Agency supervises an international customer base. By recruiting employees with an international mindset and experience they both legitimize and qualify their service. However international employees are predominantly hired in temporary, training positions (at least initially) to keep municipal budgets low. Both of the organizations are working within the service sector and therefore share a common set of values; that diversity is their unique competitive advantage and an important point of differentiation in a competitive line of business (Cox, 1995; Thomas & Ely, 1995). Especially Fastfood believes in working with diversity to prepare for the future workplace and to customize the organization for each customer.

Participant engaging methods

As a critical organizational ethnographer I drifted along a continuum of full participation involving facilitation of seminars and recommendation of practical change activities to more passive observations. This was all according to whatever situationally appropriate role I could adopt for purposes of ‘being there’ or to use my expert position to actively involving in conversations on organizing diversity (Miettinen et al., 2009). The extent to which I could directly interact and involve in the organizational conversations were highly circumscribed by their structural setup and dynamics of control: In Agency I was granted unlimited possibilities of *direct* participating being invited to every meeting, workshop, social event etc., and by facilitating series of seminars with members based on my findings including an official report. In Fastfood my research activities had to be approved by and visits to restaurants were coordinated by the central HR office. My opportunity to *directly* participate while in the restaurants was limited to participative observations when I was trained as a new crew member, and in individual and focal interviews, and in meetings with the HR office. The two following empirical vignettes serve to illustrate the very different circumstances for doing intervention-based research in my two case organizations:

In Fastfood I initially embarked on ‘arm-length’ interventions of primarily advice-giving to the HR offices on the basis of visiting and ‘working’ in a number of restaurants. In the restaurants I wore a uniform and was trained as a new recruit. I fast learned how to help out without being too much in the way for busy crew whilst undertaking the ‘lowest’ tasks of lobby cleaning (usually done by ‘lobby smurfs’ i.e. the youngest employees), emptying garbage, packing children’s meals, and eventually advancing to the French Fries. It was as a trainee working in the restaurants – when burning buns and slowing down the speed in the kitchen – that I found on of the sources of their key diversity competencies: I experiences how trainers, managers, and crew’s patiently and calmly reacted to my blunders, easing my bodily sensations as ‘an elephant in a glass shop. I intimately witnessed their capability to fast and thoroughly train recruits no matter their background and prior training; living their credo of ‘everybody can work here if they adjust’, which

is vital in the face of high staff turnover and low pay. I consequently confessed to the HR officers in self-ironic accounts of 'messing up things' and manager/crew reactions in the restaurants. This converted my 'fieldwork slips' into collective reflexive sessions with HR office.

One of my first interviews in Agency was with a newly recruited consultant with Spanish background and a master degree in human science – let's call her Aya. Aya confines in me that she is very upset with the way tasks are distributed favoring members with 'native Danish' and political science background with high-prestige strategic tasks, whilst reserving the low prestige outgoing practical tasks for members with international background. Teaming up with her section manager – my primary contact person – we conspire to alter this tasks distributing practice by the section manager giving political-strategic tasks to Aya; now acting like a 'game changer'. Subsequently Aya is more or less left to her own devices to prove that indeed a non-Danish, non-political science trained employee can perform political-strategic tasks. There are no formal supportive structures in place and the section manager is too busy elsewhere to provide the necessary support. Moreover the changed pattern of task distribution is officially countered by other managers, and despite initial praising by peers, they increasingly exclude Aya professionally and socially: 'It is a toxic climate and I get back-stabbed every now and then'. On frequent meetings with the section manager, I encourage supportive structures to shelter Aya like official 'rites de passage' of her appointment, feedback on her work, and teaming her up with other strategic-political performing employees. After some months the section manager quits her job and Aya is on sick leave.

The consultant-researcher between power and social relations

As these two vignettes illustrate, the researcher-researched relations inevitable involves both social and power intertwined relations. This intimately relates to the issue of self-reflexivity to address the issue of 'ethnographic authority' whereby the researcher occupies a position of power, having sole control over themes, categories and frames by which the participants studied come to be represented (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015). For instance Fine (1994) argues, that this power relationship between researcher and researched is often asymmetrical and possibly exploitative, tilting to the favor of the researcher having unquestioned authority to 'lay out' organizational events and identities.

This was definitely not my experience in the field: Resting on a relational framework where research is a jointly produced outcome co-created by research participants, the researcher, and the relationship between them, this situation deconstructs the researcher's sole authority (Michailova et al., 2014). The impact of co-construction and impossibility to 'steer' the research process are central in my research process, which were vital experiences of organizational dynamics revelatory to power relations. But the consultant-researcher position gave me a complicated political and social role entanglement which included inclusive and excluding situations; I was persistently assumed to be affiliated with certain subcultures or fragmentations in the organization which infringed the acceptability of my findings (Burkitt, 2012; Donnelly et al., 2013; Humphrey, 2007; King et al., 2013). To do interventions you have to build high-trust relations to significant, well positioned actors capable to set the organizational agenda. However the 'terms of the game' were different in the two organizations.

In a post-bureaucratic, political organization like Agency, successful change rests upon teaming up with the 'right' supporters together with timing and persistence (March, 1994). As such I had to navigate not only the formal but especially the informal hierarchy of elite peer characterizing the post-bureaucratic form (explored in Article three 'Unequal by structure') – to team up with the rights agents to embark on 'cooperative resistance'. In the post-bureaucracy official leaders allow dissenters to demonstrate they have power not only 'to accept imperative commands but also to innovate and transform these, in a goal-oriented way, through *cooperative resistance*.' (Courpasson & Clegg, 2012: 57) These aspirations draw on the post-bureaucratic values of dialogue, empowerment and deliberation and acts of dissent become part of the official channels to change (Sløk, 2009). However, not everyone can resist: the right to contest is premised on expert knowledge, personal credibility and legitimization by formal authorities to impose temporary visions of improving performance, service or costs – staying within the

boundaries and reinforcing the dominant productive logic to be a valid contestator (Courpasson et al., 2012). As such the post-bureaucratic organization becomes a political space (polyarchy) and acts of resistance are perceived as acts of power, fixing the internal political power balances. Cooperative resistance is used as career or status enhancers by organizational members (Courpasson & Clegg, 2012: 73). This means that my interventions became part of a complex internal political game of signaling position, alliances, status and power - either by joining or opposing the process of 'cooperative resistance'. This added additional layers of politics to my research making the process increasingly difficult to manage which included the actual impact and outcome of the interventions.

My experiences were very different in Fastfood where the legitimacy from the official hierarchy was the only path to change; using the logics of rules and rationalization. As such my research was dependent on a (asymmetrical) companionship based on the requesting party's sense of necessity related to my research dictating the research premises. This is also what Staunæs and Søndergaard (2007) refer to as collaborative tango where the leading dance partner is the case organization and the one being led is the researcher.

The consultant-researcher: useful idiot or tempered radical?

Issues of political entanglement and power games in the organization are linked to the discussion on the genuine impact of intervention-based research which is central to this study. Here the aspect of practical relevance becomes important in relation to what kind of change processes get triggered by the research interventions, and with what consequences? (Benschop & Van den Brink, 2012; Carr & Hancock, 2006; Humphrey, 2007; Meyerson & Kolb, 2000; Schwarz & Stensaker, 2014; Shotter, 2010; Weick, 2011; Weick & Quinn, 1999) Interventions should not only be applied to generate 'rich and rigorous' data

(Cunliffe & Coupland, 2011; Davis, 2010; Hibbert et al., 2014), they should also produce more enduring transformative consequences igniting collective reflexivity among organizational participants (Cunliffe, 2010; Shore, 2010). Engaging in relational reflexivity though interventions should be to the mutual benefit; critically interrogating taken-for-granted organizational practices of the participants; and critically questioning conventional disciplined thinking of the researcher. Interventions potentially enhances the relevance of research findings for practitioners (Bartunek, 2007; Deertz, 2008; Shotter, 2010); but along with longtime immersion comes along organizational relational experiences and encounters with unintended consequences that has to be tactically maneuvered – which is both an enabling and constraining endeavor for the researcher.

Fine (1994) goes on to argue that the power relationship between researcher and researched is asymmetrical because we (as researchers) observe, analyze, and represent the lives of others, we colonize (speak for and construct their identities) and distance them by writing their voices out of our research and treat them as generalized abstractions whilst losing the subjects. However rich and detailed data depends on the maintenance of positive relationships, and these relations are in no way possible to strategically manage or control when it comes to the outcome of interactions – rather the opposite (Reeves, 2010). Perceiving power as a characteristic of all human relations, researcher and participants simultaneously enable and constrain each other's actions: I was involved in a constant power-negotiations of my position and range of action – driven by my need to maintain close contact to obtain rich data – which turned out to be a (oftentimes unconscious) mechanism for participants to gain power in both of my case organizations.

These power-negotiations gave way for exploring different positioning possibilities as a consultant-researcher (Czarniawska, 2001): One of the most troublesome but also interesting positions I explored was when doing seminars in Agency: In these situations I

predominantly took up the position as consultant whilst struggling to keep in charge of events – embodying a troublesome identity. This involved coordination and legitimation by the planning committee and to convince the participants – especially section manager and ‘dominant’ elite employees – to participate and take seriously my interventions. I did not hold the status and authority of an outside consultant recruited, bought and paid to do consultancy work. Even though the organizational members claimed to favor me since; ‘you know the organization and do not employ a prescriptive framework like an external consultant’ it was difficult for me to keep them on the track. What is more, whenever difficult conversational themes emerged and anxiety rose, the section manager would intervene to take over the conversation or steer it in another direction (Stacey & Griffin, 2005).

Interventions brought along unanticipated consequences: Researchers doing longitudinal fieldwork in organizations often run the risk of finding themselves involved in the political struggles and conflicts of participants (Naima Mikkelsen, 2013). I was increasingly symbolically ‘used’ to make (il-) legitimize certain agendas: The CEO in Agency made use of my presence at center and management meetings to make statements or jokes on diversity. This again provoked employees’ counter-act to demonstrate resistance. I was used as an excuse to put diversity at the agenda to defy the top management critical stance towards diversity and exhibit hypocrisy, giving impetus to the seminars. For instance during an interview the respondent reflected: ‘Before the interview I was thinking whether I should mention ethnicity at all. Usually I try to avoid the subject, but I was thinking ‘this is a necessity. She (the researcher, ed.) needs to hear about these things’. Apparently she wanted to reflect on her experiences – not as much in consideration of my research – but to convey a message to the management through my findings.

In Fastfood, the clear distinction between doing research when in the restaurant and advice-giving in the HR office initially made my navigation of both situations seemingly clear cut and frictionless – but this situation changed along the way: Doing focal interviews with crew and restaurant management on sensitive issues (with the consent of the HR office) like decision-making, information sharing, power distance, and internal respect and tolerance, these topics gave rise to critical and ‘laded’ debates making it difficult for me to keep a professional distance as the situation invited empathy. Travelling from restaurant to restaurant carrying examples, illustrative stories, and suggestions, I increasingly embodied a consulting role qua my growing inside knowledge on the gesture of participants. The HR office had chosen the restaurants I was to visit and this often sparked off local sensemaking about the ‘actual’ intent of my visit a recurrent theme. Even though participants were to be kept anonymous, this situation started to inflict on the ethics of my research. To navigate this troublesome researcher-consultant role combined with its increasingly ‘tarnished’ ethics, I tried to do doublethink: To embark on constructive ignorance in the moment bracketing one role in order to go on and absolve myself from the need to resolve their entanglement, as well as the inherent conflict produced by maintaining connections between them (El-Sawad et al., 2004). But acting like researcher in the restaurants and consultant in the HR office proved to be rather difficult as well as not expected by restaurant managers and crew: They were used to internal Fastfood consultants and navigated fluently how to convey a message to the HR through me – playing the game using me to voice frustrations and dissatisfaction.

In both of my case organizations I increasingly incarnated a ‘message’ girl and the political implications of my presence grew – contrary to my intentions – making my consultant-researcher role increasing troublesome to the advancement and detriment of my intervention efforts: In Fastfood I was seen as passing on intentions from HR qua the questions I asked collectively formulated with the HR officials, and vice versa conveying

messages to the HR office in answers from crew and restaurant managers. Likewise in Agency I embodied a playing brick in their internal power game between management and employees, and between different collegial fractions. Accordingly, my role was constantly negotiated by the response from my participants which reflects the social construction of research (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). On the one hand, their political use of my role as consultant-researcher facilitated 'making the familiar strange' and avoiding 'being one of them' giving way for critical distance to reflect and problematize beneficial to the research (Ybema & Kamsteg, 2009): This gave rich insides and cues on the power relations and taboos surrounding diversity when unpacking the meanings and interpreting situations. On the other hand, a sizable degree of control over what came out of the research cooperation was passed over to the participants in both organizations, making the situation increasingly difficult to navigate – for me and the participants

Ethics and the cost of emancipation

The mayor challenge when doing a critical performative research – that involves a critical-affirmative stance – is captured in the ambiguous situation of caring for the actors' view while trying to challenge them. Spicer et al. (2009: 548) emphasize that arrogance is one risk while the other is accepting and legitimizing the current social order. Meyerson and Kolb (2000: 568-9) add another prevalent risk of losing the critical (gender) aspect of a dual agenda based on their experiences with applying feminist critique as a 'way to generate alternative organizing possibilities that could further the goal of gender equity and at the same time help organizations be more effective.

Emancipatory change-oriented processes are not 'free of charge' and involve a trade-off between certain gains and losses... Awareness of the anti-emancipatory potential in all good suggestions and prescriptions encourages deeper reflection of how seemingly humanistic ideas lend themselves to ideological usage. (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992: 447)

An anti-emancipatory potential runs through all projects, even those with the best intentions, preceded by careful reflection: The dynamics and dialectics of emancipation mean that an idea, or an intended practice, can be subverted in its practical application. Even if the intervention begins by opening up understanding or facilitating reflection, it can end up locking people into certain, fixed, unreflective thinking (Willmott, 1991). The dark side of critical ethnographic research must be acknowledged which was a lesson learnt from both of my organizations: In Agency Aya illustrates how confronting the distribution of privilege and disadvantage in the organization often comes at a personal cost. Doing so she apparently shifted the security of a tight social network based on a pre-defined practical-representative position for high-prestigious, but alienating tasks – giving her more foes than friends in the organization (which I reflect on in Article four). As such her example reconfirmed rather than challenged a task distribution perpetuating what some employees’ experienced as unequal opportunity structures. In Fastfood it could be argued that I helped to create a certain air of ‘humanistic management’ in an environment that could be otherwise characterized by employees’ alienation by means of inhumane, mechanistic control (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). However, my ambition was never to enhance the total sum of happiness in the organization pursuing a ‘happiness ethic’ (Darmer & Thomsen, 2010). My ambition was more of an ‘ethic of duty’ to give back to the organization through intervening through critical participation – despite a latent danger of triggering non-ethical or non-emancipatory subsequent practices.

Identity, diversity and diversity management: On theoretical connections, assumptions and implications for practice

Abstract

Purpose: We examine the relationship between the identity and diversity literatures and discuss how a better understanding of the theoretical connections between the two informs both diversity research and diversity management practices.

Design/methodology/approach: Literature review followed by a discussion of the theoretical and practical consequences of connecting the identity and diversity literatures.

Findings: We inform future research in three ways. First, by showing how definitions of identity influence diversity theorizing in specific ways. Second, we explore how such definitions entail distinct foci regarding how diversity should be analyzed and interventions actioned. Third, we discuss how theoretical coherence between definitions of identity and diversity perspectives – as well as knowledge about a perspective’s advantages and limitations – is crucial for successful diversity management research and practice.

Research limitations/implications: We argue for a better understanding of differences, overlaps and limits of different identity perspectives, and for a stronger engagement with practice.

Practical implications: Our work can encourage policy makers, diversity and HR managers to question their own practices and assumptions leading to more theoretical informed diversity management practices.

Originality/value: The theoretical connections between identity and diversity literature have so far not been reviewed systematically. Our work foregrounds how important it is for diversity scholars to consider identity underpinnings of diversity research to help further develop the field within and beyond the three streams we discuss.

Keywords

Identity, diversity, diversity management, HR diversity practices.

Paper type

Literature review

Introduction

Diversity scholarship has for many years discussed the way we perceive, treat and manage people's differences such as demographic differences in the work force, behavioral differences between and among cultural groups, as well as the intersection of such differences (see for example Holvino and Kamp 2009; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Jonsen et al., 2013; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014). As these differences are ascribed to an individual – or a group of individuals – diversity theory is linked to the way individuals are perceived and constructed by themselves and others. Such a construction and perception of the self has been the focus of the interdisciplinary research field on identity. Identity theories aim at understanding how we seek to answer the existential questions “who am I?” and “how should I act?” (see for example Alvesson et al., 2008).

Identity can be considered as construction of the self that rests on an alteration, or ‘otherness’ construction: “Who am I not and how am I different? How am I different and from who? How am I similar and from who?” (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 4). Thus, dealing with the issue of diversity is always closely linked to individuals experiencing their own identity as ‘being different or not’ in a particular context. Moreover, identity construction does not happen in an arbitrary vacuum. When constructing their identity, individuals draw on social identities and/or discourses available in their social environment. This shapes how they act and how they interpret events (Kenny et al., 2011; Toyoki and Brown, 2014; 2013; Roberson, 2006; Weick et al., 2005). Hence, identity and identification are central concepts when aiming to understand diversity.

Whether diversity or ‘difference’ are defined in essentialist terms (considering specific individual traits or socio-demographic groups as the basis for diversity and/or identity definition) or whether identities and diversity are viewed as socially constructed in specific and dynamic contexts (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012) thus has important implications. Diversity and identity literatures are profoundly intertwined in ways often not explicitly acknowledged by diversity scholars, especially within the diversity *management* literature, *i.e.* the part of the diversity literature explicitly concerned with the practical application of how differences are and should be managed in organizations, and to what ends (e.g. Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). In practice, the presumptions about identity with which HR, middle managers and other diversity managers approach matters of diversity have practical implications regarding the definition of who is the target group of diversity interventions, on which criteria of sameness/difference distinctions these interventions are based, and whether ‘the business case’ or social justice/moral intentions guide the rationales behind diversity interventions (Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Kamp and Hagedorn, 2004).

We suggest that, while authors and practitioners may have specific positions on how they view diversity or engage with data from organizations that developed diversity policies based on certain assumptions about identity, these identity positions and assumptions are rarely addressed frontally. We suggest that this lack has led to a fragmented diversity literature that address the issue of diversity in organizations from different identity perspectives, and with different aims. Furthermore, we see the relative absence of acknowledgement of identity theory underpinnings and the presence of these ‘fault lines’ as preventing a more fruitful dialogue across diversity perspectives, but also between researchers and practitioners. The paper is structured as follows: We start by introducing identity theory and detailing three overarching perspectives, their translation and

application in the field of diversity, as well as the limits of each approach. Acknowledging the limits of dividing a large field into three such sub-themes, we then propose a discussion of how our review – and tripartition – can contribute to developing fruitful research in the field of diversity, and ultimately impact everyday practices of diversity management in organizations.

Linking identity and diversity literatures

Identity is a broad and multidisciplinary topic, and as such has been studied from varied perspectives, which have themselves been classified and labeled differently across time and disciplines (see for example Kenny et al., 2011). However, some key dichotomies are recurrent, such as “the extent to which identities are chosen or ascribed, stable or dynamic, coherent or fragmented” (Brown, 2014, p.4). In this article, we read existing diversity scholarship along the continuum from the one to the other constituent of these dichotomies. Although there are obvious limitations to doing so, in particular as it is at times impossible to assign a given article to one perspective and because streams can overlap, we will for the analytical purpose of discussing the theoretical links between the identity and diversity literatures divide identity literature into three perspectives: Social Identity Theory (and similar) perspectives; critical perspectives on identity; post-structural perspectives on identity. A broad partition, beyond its limitations, is a relevant way to make sense of a very large body of literature about identity with regards to a specific focus (Ramarajan, 2014), here the ties of identity scholarship(s) with diversity literature.

Coherent and unified identities - Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory and similar perspectives view the identity of a person as having a core that is specific and fixed for each individual; one that is unified (Brown, 2014; Ybema et al., 2009). Identity develops as a personal (ideally coherent) sense of self, which is

extremely important for how any individual sees him or herself as well as engages with others. A major approach derived from this line of thinking is Social Identity Theory (SIT), which was introduced in the 1970s in the field of social psychology by Tajfel and Turner (e.g. Tajfel and Turner, 1985). Some groups are more relevant and salient to the self-concept than others, and these relevant groups constitute social identity (van Tilburg and Igou, 2011; Dokko et al., 2013; Brewer et al., 2010; Deaux, 2001).

Social identity expands one's sense of self at the group-level: by means of social identification processes, we define ourselves in terms of categories that we share with other people, and social identity theory presumes commonalities with others based on rather fixed categories (Tran et al., 2010; Deaux, 2001). In an organizational context such socio-psychological group processes are used to explain organizational phenomena such as inclusion and exclusion, the formation of in- and out-groups, and 'similarity attraction' in workgroup and team formation (Shore et al., 2011; Tran et al., 2010; Ellemers, et al., 2002). The formation of these groups – and the corresponding categories that are formed based on such group formation to classify whether people belong or not – help organizational members navigate the complexity of stimuli in social relating as a certain ordering is enforced, providing members with systematic means of defining others and to locate oneself (Ashforth and Mael, 1989). This means that SIT is composed of, on the one hand, characteristics that are fixed and tied to the self, such as phenotypical attributes or values, and, on the other hand, of “a social identity encompassing salient group classifications” (Ashforth and Mael, 1989, p. 21) that can be multiple, for example identification as a woman, as an accountant, or as a Dane.

SIT perspectives in diversity research – managerial arguments

Within a SIT conceptualization of categories, the focus has been on demographic attributes, in particular race and gender, as they are deemed the strongest predictors of

group formation in organizations. For example, part of the literature presents findings claiming that gender represents not only surface level characteristics but also refers to deep-level differences (e.g. Harrison and Klein, 2007; Jehn et al., 1999) such as differences in values (Gove, 1994; Weber et al., 2009). Such differences in values are important because value similarities have been shown to be positively associated with social attraction (McGrath, 1984) and group member interaction (Thibaut and Kelley, 1959).

The topic of racial/ethnic diversity is predominant in the field of social psychology or cognitive psychology. In relation to diversity research, some of the more frequently cited theories – apart from SIT – include a wide range of related theories such as intergroup theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1985), social- and self-categorization theories (Pettigrew, 1986; Tajfel, 1981), the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954), and tokenism and proportionality theories (Kanter, 1977; Oliver et al., 1985). Studies in line with such theories have been used to consider negative predictions and outcomes of race/ethnicity (Mamman et al., 2012; Shore et al., 2009) or gender differences on, for example, organizational processes, performance, or innovation (Adams and Ferreira, 2009; Luring and Selmer, 2010). Other studies consider positive predictions in relation to ‘valuing diversity’ and the ‘business case’ claiming that diversity leads to positive outcomes such as bottom-line gains, improved corporate image, enhanced problem solving ability, or increased team and organizational learning (Cox, 1993; Thomas and Ely, 1995). A popular example is the literature stream examining the effect of women directors on firm performance (Hoogendoorn et al., 2013; Lückersmith-Rovers, 2011).

Critique of SIT inspired diversity literature

SIT-inspired work in the field of diversity is underpinned by an assumption that ‘salient’ diversity categories are fixed, stable, and analyzable, and as such transcend time and place

– and are therefore barely changeable (Benschop and Van den Brink, 2013; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Jonsen et al., 2011; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009). SIT grants the individual some autonomy in relation to identity formation by being able to identify with different groups (unified but not unitary selves), but simultaneously it produces a rigid perception of identity as having a fixed and permanent core, assuming that as long as people can be classified and mapped, they can be better managed. Beyond this limit, it means we evade the issue of changing historical perceptions of for example age or gender. It follows that the SIT perspective largely ignores the complexity of shifting and multiple forms of identification that people draw on in changing situations and contexts (Calás et al., 2012), and therefore makes positive social transformation difficult (Kenny et al., 2011). Another key critique of the SIT perspective is the element of ‘depersonalization’, *i.e.* of seeing the self as an embodiment of the in-group prototype, as argued for example by Alvesson (2010). This can lead to privileging the group or organization as a source of identity whilst assuming that the way different individuals perceive themselves and their group/organization is comparable.

This is also what Tatli and Özbilgin (2012) identify as an ‘etic’ approach to diversity based on pre-established and pre-fixed (*ex ante*), rather than emerging categories of difference. This essentialist approach to diversity studies is often combined with a single-category focus (e.g. gender, race or ethnicity, or age), thus overlooking the role of the intersections of multiple forms of difference. In addition, it often lacks a sense of context and thereby disregards the dynamic nature of power and inequality relations. Although easily applicable and also useful for given analytical designs, this can lead to oversimplification and stereotyping – either reinforcing stereotypes by the tendency to combine ‘difference’ with otherwise marginalized groups on the labor market, or as a means to gloss over and ‘dissolve differences’ in pursuit of corporate integration and profitability (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al., 2010; Lorbiecki and Jack, 2009). This has led to an

oscillation between ‘colorblind diversity policies’ in the quest to overcome resistance or ‘identity conscious’ in the quest for social justice and articulation of historically based structural and power related inequalities (Tran et al., 2010).

Floating identities – a critical perspective

The fixing of categories can be a political strategy for practitioners. If working in and against a system built upon the privileges and rights related to certain fixed identities, then the uncovering of privilege can be converted into political actives, creating group solidarity as a point of departure for mobilization of pressure to change (Staunæs, 2003, p. 103). Following Clarke et al. (2009), identity construction should be seen as a dialectic process between structure and agency: “[...] while identities are achieved rather than ascribed, such identities may not always be of your own choosing” (Clarke et al., 2009, p. 347). This is in line with the idea that individual, collective and organizational identities can be seen as dynamic, open-ended and polyphonic identity construction processes (cf. Hatch and Schultz, 2002; Humphreys and Brown, 2002).

It is this sensitivity to both conventional social categories and identity regulation intersecting with a greater open-minded effort to explore identity work and reflexive identity that the critical perspective explores (Bardon et al., 2014; Giddens, 1996; Kuhn, 2006; Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). This position navigates between on the one hand *identity regulation* concerned with frames of discourses that provides scripts, roles and subject positions suturing people in social structures, and on the other *identity work* concerned with the actors’ efforts to create a coherent sense of self in response to the multiple and perhaps conflicting scripts, roles, and subject positions encountered in organizational relations (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Kuhn, 2006; Weber and Glynn, 2006). The critical perspective thus distances itself from the SIT perspective by examining

what external dimensions of power and discourse influence the subject in ways that renders the individual autonomy – assumed by SIT – impossible. The critical perspective also has an emancipatory agenda as such views on identity lead to investigations of various ways identity regulation can be used as managerial control mechanisms (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2004; Muhr et al., 2013).

Critical perspectives in diversity literature – social justice for minorities and the less privileged

To make up for the ‘flaws’ of an essentialized static account of diversity rooted in SIT, an ‘emic’ approach (as opposed to the formerly mentioned ‘etic’ approach) based on emerging and situated, rather than pre-determined, categories of diversity has been proposed (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). This conceptualization of emergent, intersectional and relational identities is well established within critical diversity literature (e.g. Calás et al., 2012; Kenny and Briner, 2014). The critical diversity literature has in particular been focused on deconstructing and de-essentializing the notion of diversity to demonstrate how demographic categories and identities are not to be seen as static and fixed but as socially constructed and under constant redefinition under the influence of competing discourses and existing structures of power (Knoppers et al., 2014; Lorbiecki and Jack, 2009; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011; Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). The principle that underpins much critical diversity literature is therefore the seeking for social justice. In order to ‘unmask’ power dynamics, it is illustrated how diversity management as a managerial practice can be a form of managerial control by defining minority employees in fixed, essential groups with negative connotations (see also Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Zanoni et al., 2010; Boogaard and Roggeband 2009; 2000; Simon and Oakes, 2006; Roberson, 2006).

In a critical perspective, organizational discourses such as the one on “diversity management” are considered to favor the normalizing of truth claims and other forms of organizational indoctrination by organizing everyday conduct of the members (Fleming and Spicer, 2014; Muhr et al., 2013). In this way, the progressive rhetoric behind diversity management is ‘unveiled’ as *not* only imbuing a positive organizational endeavor empowering allegedly disadvantaged ‘minority groups’ and enhancing productivity (see for example Thomas and Ely, 1996). Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) also argue that the management of diversity discourse presents managers as “the privileged subject who sees diversity as an object to be managed” (p. 23), creating two separate groups of those who manage and those who are diverse. In a similar vein, Janssens and Zanoni (2005) explore how the discourse on management of diversity equips managers with a great deal of authority in creating their version of diversity and how they situate it in a productive logic.

The focus on emerging and varying categories of differences that we see in the critical perspective is also recognized under the label of intersectionality. The main goal of the intersectional approach within the critical perspective is to analyze multiple identities in order to “avoid reducing [for example] ethnic minority employees to mere representatives of a stigmatized social group” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014, p. 317), which risks reproducing the inequality institutionalized in broader society. Some post-colonial inspired work also fall under this category of critically informed diversity research. Inspired by postcolonial theory, organizational diversity scholars have investigated the difficulties encountered by employees of non-western ethnic origins when seeking to develop legitimate and respected work identities within the dominant Western social and political formations, which dominate capitalist organizations (e.g. Calás et al., 2012; Jack and Westwood, 2006; Muhr and Salem, 2014; Banerjee, 2000; Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Westwood and Jack, 2007).

Critique of the critical perspective

Scholarship adopting the critical perspective is still rather young and emergent and thus holds great promise, but also has limitations. To start with, although existing critical contributions to the diversity literature have successfully helped understanding the shortcomings of SIT and essentialist, de-politicized categorizations, such streams have yet to develop solid empirical work mobilizing these theoretical insights; critical scholars themselves have pointed out this challenge (Lewis, 2009; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). For example, Tatli and Özbilgin acknowledge that limitations of the application of emic perspectives in empirical research are due to both convenience and legitimacy of the inquiry: “there is a strong tradition of using established categories of difference in analyses, whereas starting with an exploration of relations of power, leading to identification of salient categories, may yield surprising strands of differences, but leave the researcher in uncharted territory” (2012, p.189).

In addition, as power is often considered to be located primarily outside of individual reach, *i.e.* in structures, context, or discourse, then another kind of ‘fixing’ of the subject positions is produced. Excessive (structural) determinism, and/or the vision that specific groups hold power, underplays (dominated) individual agency. For example, critical research, with its emancipatory aims, has tended to reify managers as being powerful and other employees as powerless, or to assume that bureaucracy is necessarily detrimental to the objective of developing egalitarian, inclusive and democratic organizations, and that power is necessarily repressive; such views have been critiqued in both theoretical and empirical work (see for example Courpasson and Clegg, 2012; Ekman, 2013; Fleming and Spicer, 2014; Holck, 2014). Thus, critical diversity literature has at times lacked a ‘self-critical’ edge. Also, while this approach has allowed for the development of attention to power differences and intersectionality in specific contexts, movement between different contexts/discourses/intersectionalities for single individuals is rendered difficult by a

dialectical view of structure and agency (Calás et al., 2012). Finally, the critical perspective can be limited exactly for its focus on critique – sometimes for the sake of critique – and the limited attention to empirical work aiming at developing practical tools and recommendations.

Fragmented and becoming identities - A post-structural perspective

A post-structural perspective often implies a shift to talking about ‘the self’ or to subjectivity instead of identity, to point to how our sense of ‘who we are’ is shaped by the power relationships we are subject to or subjects of, as emphasized by for example Foucault (Loacker, 2013; Loacker and Muhr, 2009; Staunæs, 2003). For Foucault, discourses create normalizing standards of behavior in relation to which individuals perform their identities (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Normalizing discourses thus produce certain ‘truths’ in our everyday lives, which inform our understanding of the ‘way things should be’. This means that the concept of identity itself is considered as a form of subjugation. Through a post-structural, discursive lens, the SIT perspective of identity as centered, autonomous, and unitary – an essence or ‘being’ – is exchanged with a perception of identity as fluid, in constant ‘becoming’ and radically decentered (Ahonen et al., 2014; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002).

Identity is, in the post-structural perspective, seen as fragmented by a variety of nested, overlapping identities, external influences, and levels of consciousness. This constant external influence on the formation of self implies that “a fragmented self constantly fluctuates among diverse and changing identities, pulled by issues and events to focus on one aspect of the self rather than the other – temporarily” (Martin 1992, p. 156). This perception aligns with Mead’s (1934) conception of the individual as a ‘parliament’ of selves’. In this sense, people must renegotiate powerful and at times oppressive discourses,

as identity is “constantly open and available to be negotiated and re-negotiated, defined and redefined” as the everyday self emerges out of the reflexive social interaction with others – claiming a discursively constructed rather than an essential self (Tracy and Trethewey, 2005, p. 169).

Further, compared to other perspectives on power, it is seen as not possessed but only as exercised, which relativizes the vision of certain groups as rather powerless under given structural conditions. Several studies underline how employees are not only passive receptacles of managerial disciplining discourses – but can, as agents, reflect and act upon such discourses in more or less compliant ways, thus creating opportunities for micro-emancipation and spaces of resistance (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). Studies in this vein have shown how subjectification can be mobilized through a wide range of systems in contemporary organizations, with the result that the very identities of organizational members are enlisted to achieve certain political ends, such as productivity and efficiency.

This kind of thinking has informed research exploring the mutually constituting relationship between power and identity (e.g. Ashcraft, 2006; Gagnon and Collinson, 2014; Nicholson and Carroll, 2012; Scott, 2010; Toyoki and Brown, 2014; Tracy and Trethewey, 2005). Also, feminist philosophers in part drawing on Foucault, such as Butler (1990; 1993), Irigaray (2002), Grosz (2004) and Braidotti (2002) have insisted on seeing the subject as that which in essence is multiple, fragmented, and only temporarily integrated and rendered stable.

Post-structural perspectives in diversity research – transgressing binaries

Perceiving diversity as something constructed by ideological intervention and management of meaning – and differences as constructed and governed to produce desired managerial

effects – renders diversity and its management a contested site of discursive struggles (Ahonen et al., 2014). This leans on a post-structuralist understanding of identity and of the phenomenon of diversity, emphasizing how diversity is, on the one hand, articulated, staged and performed by the employees and, on the other, enforced upon, attributed to employees and articulated in the process of social relating and casting (Czarniawska and Hoepfl, 2002; Down and Reveley, 2009). Specialist discourses have an important role, and diversity management practices themselves should be understood as a form of ‘truth regime’ that constitutes the self and the other in specific ways (Ahonen, 2014). Diversity can therefore be used for divergent purposes, such as an idea, a taxonomical tool, or a mechanism for disciplining identities.

The very idea that diversity management can work as an unbiased mechanism seeking social justice is naïve and even at times unethical (Muhr, 2008). Rather, in order to resist the subjugating power of diversity, it becomes the main objective to “unmask ‘hidden’ contexts and ‘invisible’ power relations” (Ahonen et al., 2014, p. 270) and questioning established structures of domination and subordination (Meriläinen et al., 2009). Post-structural approaches to diversity therefore often argue for an un-categorical approach (Muhr, 2008), or at least one in which the categories are rethought as events, actions, and encounters between bodies, *i.e.* relational existence as becoming rather than as being (Puar, 2012).

In such a post-structural critique of diversity, researchers have proposed to view diversity from a transgressive point of view where the transgression of binaries is at the center (see for example Muhr and Rehn, 2014; Pullen, 2006; Muhr, 2011; Philips et al., 2013). In response to the post-structural critique of diversity management, feminist and queer theories have been used to highlight the ‘contingent foundations’ of gendered and sexual subjectivities (Butler, 1990; 1993), and in so doing, they forward a political project aimed

at opening up restrictive, dualistic notions of embodiment to a wider multiplicity of sexed, gendered, or sexual being(s).

Post-structural writings on gender in organization studies (drawing on Butler, but also Cixous or Kristeva) have emphasized a transgressive, multiple or fluid way of seeing gender, one which is positioned to break with gender essentialism in organization studies (e.g. Borgerson and Rehn, 2004; Linstead and Pullen, 2006; Muhr, 2012; Muhr and Rehn, 2014; Pullen, 2006). Muhr and Sullivan's (2013) study of a transgendered manager for example clearly shows how co-workers – despite being supportive and generally very tolerant – change their expectations to the manager's abilities and skills after her change in gender appearance from man to woman. Such research aims at destabilizing our common sense, normalized understanding of gender (Muhr and Sullivan, 2013) or ethnic minority employees (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2009).

Destabilization is achieved by broadening norms, which offer multiple positioning that are less hierarchical in value and transgresses the normal hierarchical relationship between, for example, gender and ethnicities/origins. This kind of disruption therefore makes space for individual experience beyond the usual diversity categorization. In this way, the post-structural perspective criticizes the SIT perspective for being managerial and the critical perspective for being blinded in its search for social justice. Also, the post-structural perspective stresses that researchers should not only be critical towards the diversity practices under scrutiny, but also to their very own framing and comprehension of this, including the blind spots and bounded paths their approach brings about.

Critique of the post-structural perspective

Some of the critique that has been raised towards the post-structural perspective on identity and diversity is actually in line with the critique towards the SIT perspective. Critics point out that in the more austere, ‘deterministic’ versions of post-structuralism, the individual has no autonomy in ‘identity creation’ but is the subject of ‘hegemonic’ discourses shaping and imposing certain identities. This leads to the overemphasizing of the ‘fragility’ of the self and its vulnerability to the power of discourse, in what Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) term a ‘muscular discourse’, “... associating identity as tightly intertwined with and a product of the operations of power offering a hard-to-resist template” (Alvesson, 2010, p. 207) rendering actors’ identities ‘colonized and cloned’ (Gagnon and Collinson, 2014) or formed as ‘gingerbread’ or ‘McSelves’, *i.e.* generic identity molds that each “elects to fit itself into” (Scott, 2010, p. 219). It has also been argued that individuals have a certain degree of agency, voluntarism and choice that is inherent in every power relation, meaning that actors do not experience the mortifying “loss of self through institutionalization” but “willingly discard the old selves in the hope to find something better” (Scott, 2010, p. 219) – within a limited range of possible identities, however.

This approach can be seen as an unfruitful decoupling or disconnection of discourse (what is said) and practice (what is done) (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011, p. 1125). Moreover, Foucault’s work, for example, does not let us clearly locate domination, including domination in gender relations: he has on the one hand claimed that individuals are constituted by power relations, but he has argued against their constitution by relations such as the domination of one group by another. That is, his account makes room only for abstract individuals, not women, men, or workers (Hartsock, 1990, p. 169). This means that for example the feminist identity risks being lost under the discursive turn of post-structuralism (Calás et al., 2012).

Concluding comments: Implications and directions for diversity research and diversity management practices

Our reading of diversity literature through the lens of identity has allowed us to outline three broad ways of defining and tackling diversity management. These are: 1) a perspective grounded in Social Identity Theory (SIT) and similar streams of literature, 2) a perspective that is critical of SIT and that emphasizes the social/structural embeddedness of identity work, identity construction and power dynamics, and 3) a perspective grounded in post-structuralist approaches to identity, where the concept of identity itself is seen as a form of subjugation.

From this classification, we propose to discuss more specifically what the implications are for future diversity research, and for the development of diversity management. If diversity categories are seen as fixed and unified, diversity management will focus on managing not the individuals, but the groups individuals identify or are associated with. This approach is arguably the most prevalent one in today's organizations (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012), notably through the popularization of the 'business case' for diversity. Indeed, it simplifies HR work by tailoring practices to whole groups rather than individuals, and simplifies the justification of diversity policies, as group identification and assignation is seen as based on objective differences rather than on power differentials and constraint. Also, the 'business case' promotes an apolitical, power-void perception of diversity as individualized and a matter of personal skills and talents (Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010; Oswick & Noon, 2014). However, the difficulty of identifying which categories are relevant and important in a particular context makes it difficult to develop actionable tools for practice (Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012).

For diversity scholars in all perspectives, in particular in critical and post-structuralist-oriented work, this calls for a stronger engagement with everyday practice in order to be

able to complement or supplement diversity management tools grounded in SIT, and enter into a closer dialogue with diversity policy makers, diversity and HR managers. Indeed, while the contribution of critical work has considerably enriched debates about diversity and diversity policies and practices in organizations, such scholarship has to frontally engage with practice, in order to fulfill its emancipatory aspirations and to be able to appraise the depth and breath of change required within and beyond organizations to develop more democratic, inclusive and equal workplaces. Then, as we have seen, the post-structuralist perspective has been critical of SIT perspective for its ‘managerialism’, and of critical work for its blindness to other possible power states than the ones recurrently identified. However, this distancing, or even disdain for management as a practice, and for policy making following managerial(ist) injunctions, can mean that there is a reluctance to take strong stances and experiment empirically. Also, these approaches are rather remote from the concerns of organizations, which are looking for ways to administer the ‘now’ and tend to function in an ethos of performance and data-driven human resources management, *i.e.* a measurable numerical and representative approach to diversity management.

Second, we highlight that the three theoretical perspectives fulfill different agendas. As a consequence, the three outlined perspectives are not necessarily to be hierarchized, but rather to be seen as a continuum of perspectives on the perception and construction of the self and of how individuals can be considered and managed in an organizational context. We have shown how SIT has inspired practices such as diversity management and has triggered the development of a critical literature that is itself also critical of extreme versions of post-structuralist perspectives on diversity. However, one could also highlight the partial overlap, or continuity between different perspectives. Indeed, SIT acknowledges a relational dimension in identity formation, thus making it a socially situated act, paving

the way for literature discussing both inward and outward facing identity work (Watson, 2008), and critical work considering how power and inequalities infuse this relational process. Similarly, discourse is considered as an essential element of identity and diversity debates in both critical and poststructuralist work. Finally, extreme versions of post-structuralism have been criticized for diluting the existence of recurrent discrimination against specific groups of individuals and thus overplaying the capacity of the individual to transcend existing states of power.

For practice, this co-existence of different identity perspectives and the fact that they constitute a continuum also means that diversity managers can develop interests into how economic expectations can be met while developing a higher sensibility to the forces at play in a given context, and try to integrate them into local diversity policy development and implementation, thus participating to integrating diversity in the organizational identity (Cole and Salimath, 2013). In addition, this review can encourage policy makers and (HR) managers to question the development and implementation of popular ‘top-down’ practices, for example, quotas or internal groups and network targeted at a supposed homogeneous group. Relatedly, our review can also encourage practitioners to question their own assumptions, and reflect on the extend to which individuals perform and embody an identity that is imposed on them by the organizational discourse itself rather than a core and fixed self-identity. As Ghorashi and Sabelis (2013) wisely advise, “the main challenge is to recognize otherness while making space for individual experiences beyond categorizations” (p. 83). Hence, destabilization of identity categories constitutes in itself a political act (Butler, 1990) and acquiring greater awareness of the political and power-structural implications of the complex entanglement of identity and diversity is a first step to strategically open up for possibilities for more situated, changeable, and ongoing choices when dealing with differences on an everyday basis (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014).

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5. From affirmative to transformative diversity management – On how the logics of the welfare model obstructs ethnic diversity in the Danish workforce

Abstract

Diversity management was originally coined as an American concept resting on a logic of ‘difference’. Due to only recent waves of immigration, diversity management is a new phenomenon in Denmark. Here, it is merged with the Danish universal welfare model’s logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility. Drawing on narrative analysis of 94 employees’ stories on difference, we show how these logics, rather than a respect for difference, turns diversity management into a corporate ambiguous practice where differences become assimilated and marginalized rather than valued and respected. Paradoxically, the historically important welfare values obstruct successful labor market integration. We conclude by suggesting that in order to conduct more successful – transformative – diversity management, we need to reintroduce difference into the welfare logics.

Key words: Assimilation, difference, diversity management, ethnic minorities, redistribution, recognition, welfare.

Introduction

Occasioned by increasing work force mobility, migration and internationalization of education curricula, the national, cultural and professional differences of employees are getting more common in organizations – in Denmark as in the rest of the world. Denmark as well as the other Scandinavian countries, however differs from most other Western countries because of its fairly short history of demographic diversity. Whereas most other Western countries because of migration, immigration, colonization⁷ or continuous rivalry have had diverse populations for centuries, Denmark (and the other Scandinavian countries) has only, during the past 50 years, experienced a demographic change (Anttonen et al., 2012; Larsen, 2011; Lauring, 2009; Rennison, 2009; Siim, 2013). Once a fairly homogenous population with only a small minority group of Germans in Southern Denmark, this situation has been significantly modified since the first Turkish ‘foreign workers’ arrived due to labor shortages in the booming 1960s of post-war economic growth⁸ (Ejrnæs, 2006, 2012). From the 1980s onwards, there has been an influx of immigrants and refugees from the world’s hotspots, and more recently from the mid-2000s, there has been a small but growing presence of expatriates in the Danish labor market⁹.

Due to the relative short experience with a diverse population – and workforce – diversity management was first introduced in the Danish business context at the turn of the millennium, when it was mentioned in a Danish newspaper in 2000 (Berlingske Tidende cf. Boxenbaum, 2006). Since then it has appeared more frequently both in media, and in

⁷ Denmark is however to be considered among the colonial countries with 200 years of colonialism – especially of Greenland.

⁸ They were originally called ‘foreign’ or ‘guest’ workers as they were supposed to return to Turkey after some years of working in Denmark. Most did not return, but brought their families instead, and citizens descending from Turkey now make up the largest ethnic minority group in Denmark, followed by Poland, Germany, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia, Iran and Romania. 11, 2 pct of the population in Denmark have immigrant background, out of which 2,7 pct. are descendants. 3,9 pct. of Western and 7,2 pct of non-Western decent.

⁹ In 2013 56,000 people immigrated to Denmark, which is the highest number ever. Two out of three came from EU countries or Western countries like the United States, Norway and Poland.

the political and management arena (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Lauring, 2009; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008). When diversity management hit the political and business agenda, it was received as a relevant solution to several labor market problems at that time, which are still predominant: High unemployment rates among a growing number of immigrants and their descendants from mostly non-western countries, combined with an ageing population, and a declining number of people within the labor force¹⁰. In addition, the 00s introduced a debate on the low number of women in top management positions and boards that further added to the debate of diversity. Still, however, the term diversity management (in Danish ‘mangfoldighedsledelse’) is usually used for ethnic diversity, whereas gender is explicitly used when talking about gender diversity. When we use the term ‘diversity management’ in this paper, we therefore also refer to ethnic diversity. These labor market problems fuelled a public debate on how to deal efficiently and progressively with the integration of an increasingly diverse labor force leading to a particular Danish variant of diversity management fused with an inclusive labor market policy, as we will return to below.

When an (American) managerial concept like diversity management diffuses across the globe, it will be translated to fit the receiving society (Sahlin & Wedlin, 2008; Waldorff et al., 2013). For ideas, customs and practices to travel they must first be dis-embedded and then re-embedded in the place they land, and their translocation or transplantation will be particularized according to the local circumstances and hence local variations will be produced (Czarniawska, 2008, p. 93). This is also the case with diversity management that originates from a totally different historical frame of a post-colonial society and draws on a business logic of difference and voluntarism that not hitherto has been dominant in

¹⁰ According to Danish Statics 653.031 citizens with immigrant background and their descendants live in Denmark in 2014, out of which 140.000 are active on the labor market. In 2014 the employment rate among immigrants and descendants was 50 pct. compared to an employment rate of 73 pct. among citizens with ethnic Danish background (Denmark’s Statistics).

Scandinavia (Boxenbaum, 2006; Calás et al., 2009; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Muhr & Salem, 2013; Risberg & Söderberg, 2008).

In analyzing the local Danish translation of diversity management, this article responds to the recent call for a higher awareness of the historical-temporal ‘situation’ of corporate diversity work (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2010; Ghorashi & van Tilburg, 2006; Janssens & Zanon, 2014; Ostendorp & Steyart, 2009; Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011; Siebers, 2009; Tatli et al., 2012). The argument is that in order to gain more insights into ways of influencing and potentially transforming the local diversity climate, an approach sensitive to the larger social, cultural and historical structures within which the diversity practices are embedded has to be appropriated (Boehm et al., 2013; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Noon, 2007; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Zanon et al., 2010). Thus local diversity practices only become meaningful when interpreted in response to and as a reflection of larger societal discourses, as they do not happen in a vacuum, but are situated in time and space as ‘path-dependent and shaped by the regulatory context’ (Tatli et al., 2012, p. 295). We argue that a translation has taken place in which Danish corporations have fitted the logic of diversity management to a Danish labor market situation – a high unemployment rate among ethnic minorities – together with the historical welfare logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility (Aguilera et al., 2007; Anttonen & Sipilä, 2012; Klarsfeld, 2009; Lindeberg et al., 2013; Risberg & Söderberg, 2009; Waldorff et al., 2013). But this translation has led to affirmative diversity management practices rather than transformative (Fraser & Honneth, 2003) and allocated a precarious position to ethnic minorities in Danish organizations.

This precarious, marginalized position of ethnic minority employees in organizations dominated by the ethnic majority norms and values is a predominant theme among critical diversity research (Ariss et al., 2013; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014), which has mainly

been analyzed related to minority experiences of discrimination (Klarsfeld, 2009; Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009; Siebers, 2009; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014) or as a result of generalized societal discourses on immigration with a focus on deconstructing different elements of these discourses (Boxenbaum, 2006; Omanović, 2009, 2013; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Tatli, 2011; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). This article contributes to critical diversity research, first by broadening the contextual scope inquiring how the predominant welfare logics of equality and solidarity both enable and constrain organizing workforce diversity at corporate level, and second how these logics are translated and dealt with on a daily basis by analyzing employees' accounts of diversity related experiences and incidents in the work setting.

The article is structured as follows. First, we show how the Danish welfare model and its logics of equality and solidarity clash with the original core values of difference and voluntarism of diversity management. Drawing on Fraser (Fraser, 1998; Fraser & Honneth, 2003) we show how a local low standing of minorities might be seen as a consequence of structural inequalities. Next this is empirically examined in 94 employee stories on diversity in the Danish subsidiary of 'Fastfood', which is a prizewinning prototype of diversity driven business. Here we trace the logics of equality and solidarity in employee stories on diversity management and perceptions of difference. This is followed by a concluding discussion of how the translation of diversity management into a Danish context because of the goal of social responsibility turns into affirmative diversity management, but also how the logic of equality as sameness renders equality impossible. We conclude by suggesting that in order to conduct more successful diversity management – transformative in Fraser's terminology – we need to reintroduce difference into the old welfare logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility.

The welfare logics of equality and solidarity

Equality as sameness

Our fundamental question when organizing workforce diversity in a Danish context is how to value difference in a context where sameness is key to equality. As Gullestad (1992) has pointed to, this focus on sameness comes from the fact that Scandinavian countries were culturally homogeneous until immigration from outside Europe began in the late 60s. This focus on homogeneity and sameness is further associated with a unique contemporary Scandinavian value system, which core principle is that it is possible for the state to institute legislation to ensure redistribution and equality for all citizens (Anttonen, 1998). The notion of equality and redistribution are therefore strongly linked, but with a strong linkage also between equality and likeness or sameness as the basis for redistribution. In fact there is no clear distinction between equality and sameness like in English, as the distinction is blurred in the Scandinavian languages where the term *lig* means both being equal and being alike (Larsen, 2011).

This welfare logic of equality as sameness is important to understand how contemporary Danish society is structured and practiced as community (Jöhncke, 2007). A fundamental idea is that the societal goods must be redistributed to create welfare and equality for all; in fact it can be argued that it is through redistribution that the sense of community arises. This implies an understanding of that people can be different but not *too* culturally different to be considered fully integrated members of ‘the Danish family’ (‘familien Danmark’), which is a predominant metaphor for the Danish population (Rytter, 2007). Especially refugees, immigrants and their descendants have been singled out as a group particularly socially problematic and integration-demanding because of their foreign origin (Jöhncke, 2007; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Larsen, 2011). When this categorization is combined with the logic of equality as sameness based on national kinship it functions as an exclusionary force marking ethnic minorities as fundamentally

‘different’, and as a threat to the harmonious welfare society – creating a crack in the hitherto unproblematic linking of equality and redistribution (Ariss et al., 2013; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Ostendorph & Steyaert, 2009; Siebers, 2009).

Solidarity as social responsibility

Ethnic minorities are not only seen as a threat to cultural homogeneity but also to social coherence ensuring support for the reproduction of the welfare state. This is related to the second logic of social solidarity. The development of the Danish welfare model has since the late 1940s been promoting an imagined community of national cultural homogeneous population whilst strongly downplaying differences among the population to ensure commitment to the universal principles of redistribution (Jöhncke, 2007). Some scholars argue that homogeneity, favoring mutual identification between citizens is a necessary precondition for social solidarity, trust and electoral support for the vertical redistribution, and that growing levels of multicultural diversity reduces the scope of social solidarity weakening the preconditions for the universal welfare model (Banting, 2010; Jonsen et al., 2013; Larsen, 2011; Lister, 2009; Siim, 2013; Anttonen et al., 2012).

This logic of solidarity has also influenced the local corporate translation of diversity management. The neoliberal thinking on voluntary action imbued in the original (American) concept has been reframed and reinterpreted in a strong political discourse on the moral imperative to recruit ethnic minority candidates as part of the social responsibility of the firm. Hence a particular Danish variant has been created integrating diversity with an inclusive labor market ideology prescribing that it is possible to tackle differences by being inclusive and tolerant, and by securing labor market access for marginalized groups including ethnic minorities (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004; Rennison, 2007; Risberg & Söderberg, 2009).

The Danish variant of diversity management as fused with social responsibility has been supported by labor market and business policies since the 1990s, which has resulted in a wide range of state subsidized active labor market measures such as language and training positions, flexible and light jobs, and protective employment positions – launched to target ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups. The inclusive labor market policy is, then, founded on a multiplicity of stakeholders including jobseekers, the labor market partners and the corporations, to take greater responsibility in maintaining the welfare society applying to the social democratic dogma: ‘provide according to ability and enjoy according to needs’ (Bredgaard, 2004; Madsen, 2007).

Diversity management translated into a Danish context is then less about capitalizing on and valuing human capital differences (a business imperative) and more about eventually creating equal opportunities (a moral imperative). Ethnic minorities are in this perspective recruited because the corporations feel morally committed to demonstrate their good citizenship, not to access valuable different competencies and skills held by minority candidates. This collaborative system actively promotes a corporate social responsibility mindset to the benefit of labor market integration of ethnic minorities. However, as we will argue in this paper, it also rests on flawed ethics since minorities are portrayed as a burden to society and as being in deficit in terms of lacking adequate labor market relevant skills (see also Ariss et al., 2013). In order to be turned into productive citizens contributing to the common good, the welfare model insinuates that ethnic minority employees have to be upgraded and trained by charitable corporations taking on their societal responsibility of labor market integration.

Parity of participation combining redistribution and recognition

Interpreting the predominant welfare logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility through the American philosopher and feminist Nancy Fraser's theoretical work on recognition and redistribution (Fraser & Honneth, 2003), they can be seen as posing – culturally and economically contingent – structural inequalities hampering the possibility to participate on parity for ethnic minorities. Fraser takes her point of departure in a universal and liberal norm to ensure everybody's parity of participation as peer – no matter your perception of the 'the good life'. Fraser's framing of justice as *per definition* related to social structures and institutional frames means that individual problems becomes a question of justice *when* they grow into a pattern traceable to more systemic causes. Hence what could have been deemed individual, personal problems (ex. majority prejudice and minority 'distorted selves') actually turns out to have systemic qualities; injustice then takes its root in social institutions and relations, not in the individual psyche. Recognition is then a matter of justice not 'self-realization' (Fraser, 1998).

Fraser focuses on justice and hence parity of participation by combining the two dimensions of recognition and redistribution. While redistribution is aimed at ameliorating socioeconomic injustice or maldistribution like economic marginalization; being confined to undesirable or poorly paid work, and deprivation; being denied adequate material standards of living. Then recognition is aimed at tackling cultural or symbolic injustices – what she terms misrecognition – like cultural domination; being subjected to patterns of interpretation and communication that are associated with another culture that are alien and/or hostile to one's own, and disrespect; being routinely maligned or disparaged in stereotypic public cultural representation and/or in everyday life interactions (Fraser, 1998). Some groups like ethnic minorities are inherently a hybrid category of two-dimension subordination suffering both from maldistribution; as an 'underclass' of low-

paid menial laborers, and misrecognition; imbuing a lower status of cultural value, but neither of these injustices is a direct effect of the other but they are entwined (Fraser & Honneth, 2003, p. 14).

In this perspective the welfare logic of equality as sameness incurs cultural domination and disrespect of other ethnicities than ethnic Danish background, distinguishing in a status hierarchy between the contributing majority defining the ‘adequate standard’ and the receiving minority, lacking cultural and professional skills and hence as a burden to the majority society. The logic of solidarity as social responsibility is trickier. While corporate social responsibility grants ethnic minorities an access to the labor market with an end goal of economic self-reliance and hence participatory parity, they tend to be introduced into the workplace through active labor market measures in short term, provisional and publicly funded positions, assigning them a lower status than the majority members in permanent positions (Lauring, 2009).

The logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility are in this way complexly cross-affiliated like the matters of recognition and redistribution, and the remedy of the one evil for example redistribution (social benefits and publicly subsidized work) unintendedly can imply further misrecognition and vice versa. Hence the two types of structural injustices of maldistribution and misrecognition and their remedies of recognition and redistribution are entwined, reciprocally reinforcing a fundamental dilemma: While the politics of recognition promotes the positive valorization of cultural differences, then redistribution serves to tone down and eventually abolish socioeconomic arrangements that underpin group differences. People subject to both cultural and economic injustice thus need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity, which Fraser terms the recognition-redistribution dilemma (Fraser, 1998, p. 74). After discussing our methodology we will turn to our analysis of

employee stories of difference in which we will trace and discuss these logics and their implications for diversity management.

Methodology

The analysis draws on a longitudinal organizational ethnographic study of the Danish subsidiary of the international chain restaurant ‘Fastfood’ over a period of two years. This includes participant observation, individual and group interviews, together with a narrative study that serves as the primary data source for this particular paper. This approach is in line with the basic principles of ethnography – e.g. thick descriptions of (organizational) cultural interaction (Geertz, 1973). The organizational ethnographer studies cultural or meaning constructing communities through close contact with a specific group of people (Van Maanen, 2011). From ‘inside’ the organization the ethnographer is to embark on first-hand encounters with the organizational members in their own setting, in the midst of doing whatever they have to do in the every flow of work tasks.

The combination of the different data generating techniques has been crucial to investigate not only organizational and individual discourses of difference and diversity (Zickar & Carter, 2010) but also the societal context in which ‘Fastfood’ and its employees are embedded (Watson, 2012). Because we seek to investigate perceptions of difference and how it is impacted by the welfare model logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as responsibility, our aim is not only to obtain ‘authentic’ descriptions. Rather we aim for what Forester (1992) calls critical ethnography, in which the intention is to dig through the layers of cultural meaning (Svensson, 2014) to understand the ‘thickly layered texture of political struggles concerning power and authority, cultural negotiations over identities, and social constructions of the “problem” at hand’ (Forester, 1992, p. 47).

Research site

‘Fastfood’ is a private restaurant chain with a host of restaurants all over Denmark and a main office housing the top management, economic-, communication-, and a HRM office servicing the restaurants. ‘Fastfood’ is officially recognized as a prototype of diversity management guided business and has been awarded numerous diversity prizes. Its focus on bottom-line gains rests on a strong belief that staff diversity improves earnings by allowing staff to acquire the representative qualities and skills needed to service diverse customers. The staff composition echoes this belief in relation to ethnicity and gender: 16 pct. of crew and 13 pct. of managers have ethnic minority background. 52 pct. of crew and 49 pct. of managers are women. 2 pct. are disabled. The exception in terms of diversity is age as 90 pct. of all employees are between 15 and 23 years old. Many of the employees with ethnic minority background have refugee, immigrant, or expatriate background, and use the organization as an access to the mainstream labor market – officially recognized in the organization as it’s ‘rebound to society’ function. Many of minority employees are employed on different public subsidized labor schemes to train their language skills, to be accustomed to ‘Danish workplace culture’ or to upgrade their professional skills. ‘Fastfood’ is a highly specialized and standardized production company with uniform global standards that apply locally. Most employees perform repetitive and monotonous low-skill tasks that are standardized into standard operating procedures in need of no prior training. The organization is formalized in a central hierarchy with a transparent personnel policy spelling out criteria for recruitment, promotion, and performance central to its diversity policy.

Data collection

The research period covered two years (May 2011-June 2013) including three fieldwork periods. In the first period (June-September 2011), the researcher was trained as a ‘new

employee' in seven restaurants, which allowed for participant observations and semi-structured interviews during breaks with crew members and managers at all levels. In total, 30 such interviews were undertaken, each lasting from 15 to 45 min. The second period (May-October 2012) included 27 group interviews with crew, middle- and restaurant managers in 9 restaurants, with each interview lasting from 30 to 70 minutes. All interviews were recorded and observations were written in daily notes making up a comprehensive fieldwork diary. A third separate study drew on a narrative approach based on 94 anonymous stories from employees from all of the restaurants (spring 2012). This narrative study makes up the primary data source in this article. During a period of nine weeks employees from all restaurants were encouraged to write up a story of a how they experience and tackle differences at their workplace. 94 short and long stories were collected. 50 of the stories were written by men and 44 by women. 52 of the narrators were between 15 to 19 years, 26 between 20 to 24 years, 13 between 25 to 35 years, and only 3 narrators were older than 40 years old. 33 of the narrators were in a managerial position (restaurant – and shift manager, and 1. and 2. assistant). 61 were crew members; 49 in a part time position out of which 27 was under 18 years old. 82 of the respondents had ethnic majority background and 12 had minority background (only crew members); four from the middle east, two from Scandinavia, two from Asia and four in the category 'other'. The narrators were encouraged to give their story a title, which is mentioned in the analysis. All respondents participated on a voluntary basis, they are anonymous, and were knowledgeable about the methods applied including observations prior to the visit of the researcher.

The choice to use the narrative material as primary source of data was due to the quality of granting unique insights into employee perceptions of and construction of diversity encounters. The stories are spontaneous, self-selected, and non-restrained by an interview situation which can be flawed by personal chemistry, leading questions and/or the

respondents trying to give ‘satisfying’ answers. In addition they take their outset in everyday work situations, and are therefore not abstract but serve to concretize and make practical diversity perceptions and experiences. The narrative study is supplemented by the additional data that serve to inform and contribute to a rich understanding of the context in which the stories are written from.

Analytical strategy

We analyzed our data in the tradition of narrative research (Czarniawska, 2004) and coding procedure developed by Strauss & Corbin (1990). In a first reading, the stories were divided into two main categories respectively manager and crew stories, and again into majority or minority stories according to the ethnic background of the narrator. These were again subdivided into stories relating to diversity as ethnic differences or a more varied conceptualization of difference; including personality, educational background, interests, age etc., and distinguishing these stories as predominantly positive or negative valorization of difference. Finally they were subdivided into stories relating to difference as a matter of professional competences and performance (valorizing difference as business case) or as a matter social responsibility, for overview of coding see table 2.

Table 2: Coding of employee stories from ‘Fastfood’

No. of stories	Category of employees in ‘Fastfood’ together with main plot of story
33	Manager-stories: One main office, 13 restaurant- and 13 shift managers, one 2. and five 1. Assistants
23	Manager stories: Positive valorization of ethnic difference combined with social responsibility attitude (two stories includes a reference to mental and physically handicapped employees)
3	Manager stories: Positive valorization of difference in broad terminology (incl. personality traits and interests) combined with social responsibility attitude
7	Manager Stories: Positive valorization of differences combined with non-managerial attitude (as the narrators own managerial position is not a theme this group might include part time

	employed lower ranking managers identifying themselves equally as managers and crew).
49	Majority crew
11	Majority crew: Positive valorization of ethnic difference combined with social responsibility attitude
10	Majority crew: Negative valorization of ethnic difference (i.e. language and cultural problems)
28	Majority crew: Positive valorization of difference in broad terminology (incl. personality traits and interests)
3	Majority crew: Positive valorization of difference explicitly relating to mental and physical handicapped employees combined with social responsibility attitude
12	Minority crew
2	Minority crew: Positive valorization of <i>own</i> difference (language skills)
10	Minority crew: Positive valorization of difference in broad terminology (incl. personality traits and interests)

Next step was a reading based on reducing and abstracting the empirical data through selective coding; we were going through the individual stories looking for important patterns and key themes aligned with the two welfare logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility, to detect whether and how they were informing perceptions on differences. Finally we compared the different themes in the stories, and grouped these in similar and divergent perceptions. The coding of the data was to uncover the emerging themes related to the following two questions: 1) How is ‘equality as sameness’ defined? What factors does it consist of? And 2) How is ‘solidarity as social responsibility’ defined? What factors does it consist of? Below we will present the findings in two sections, 1) one showing how the logic of ‘equality as sameness’ is foundational for how diversity is defined, but also how it is constantly interrupted by the underlying notion of difference, and 2) another showing how the logic ‘solidarity as social responsibility’ is equally permeated by a notion of difference. As such the two logics of the welfare model are constantly interrupted – and rendered impossible – by tales of differences.

Findings

Equality as sameness - and difference

Analyzing the stories on difference in 'Fastfood', a significant pattern emerges: More than half of the majority stories (44 stories) generalize about specific ethnic skills in an overtly positive (respectively 23 manager and 11 crew stories) or in a negative manner (10 crew stories). 10 manager and 31 majority crew stories link differences to more broadly defined characteristics as differences in personality and interests, or physical/mental handicaps (41 in all). They demonstrate how the bulk of majority managers link differences predominantly to ethnic differences while the bulk of majority crew has a more broadly defined perception of what makes up differences.

The equality as sameness logic comes out in the stories as the positive managerial stories often describe minority employees as the picture-perfect employees often linked to their assumed struggle to become 'just like us'. An example is a manager story with the title 'Smiling sunbeam' about his Vietnamese employee, who the manager compliments because he eventually takes on 'a Danish way of life and is the perfect employee'. A similar manager story is about 'The happy Somalian' who eventually achieves recognition from his colleagues by learning 'Danish work place values like arriving on time. He has become part of the social community and participates in spare time activities like playing football and Facebook – just like the other colleagues'.

However this narrative is constantly interrupted by a returning notion of difference, which ultimately render 'equality as sameness' impossible. Stories written by crewmembers with majority background show this: Roughly half of these stories (28 stories) link differences to non-ethnic related characteristics. Typical examples are stories like 'We help each other', 'We are all different', and 'Customer complaints and we all react differently'. They all share the same plot of how crewmembers' different personalities are to the benefit of

collaboration and socializing. The other half (22 stories) explicitly link differences to stories of ethnic minority colleagues. 11 of these stories are positive, and like the managerial stories, they attach certain general assumed 'ethnic' characteristics to minority colleagues like being exceptionally happy and entertaining in stories like 'Singing and dancing in the kitchen', or 'The Thai dance':

I was carrying trays to the backroom. Here I meet Dang beating two red clamps while dancing real funny. He said: "This is how we dance in Thailand". Things like this give a lot of positive energy and make me laugh.'

These stories 'ethnify' minorities as exceptionally exotic, happy colleagues. Another predominant plot is how they relate to personal development and growth when confronted with ethnic differences at work: An example is the story 'Making friends with 2. generation immigrants' in which the narrator recounts about making friends at work with local ethnic minority youths that he 'would usually avoid'. In 'People with another background' the narrator reflects on how he learned that things can be 'perceived as racist in another culture' by working in a multi-cultural setting. In a similar vein is the story 'Arch-type Ahmed':

First time I met Ahmed, he was a real 'Ahmed type'; a well-built Lebanese in a black BMW, grease-hair and an accent that rhymed loudly on Libanon and dishes directed towards Mecca. Oh no, I thought. But Ahmed turned out to be one of the friendliest, well-meaning and dedicated colleagues I have ever met. Talking to Ahmed during the more quiet closing hours gives me a chance to get a glimpse into a different world under the surface of what I thought was my own. I learn just about as much about myself, as I do about Ahmed.

These stories all share the plot of how the narrator learn and grow as a person to be more tolerant and including when working in a multi-ethnic environment. Hence the narrators only relate to personal development and enlarged sense of community, not to professionalization like better service or enhanced performance due to differences. They moreover take their outset in stereotypic initial perception of ethnic minorities that they

then claim to challenge whilst upholding yet another stereotype about the exceptional colleague. Like the majority manager stories, ‘developmental tales’ draw on and make manifest ethnic minority colleagues as characterized by group features – not as unique persons with individual qualities, interests and personalities first and foremost.

The last bulk of majority crew stories (10) links differences to ethnic minorities as being problematic with a negative impact on performance and social relations. These stories relate to incidents of lack of communication due to language difficulties and/or cultural barriers. The stories have titles like ‘My silent team’, ‘Noise on the line’, ‘Conflict problem’, or ‘Cultural differences’:

I was working with a new Indian employee. I asked several times if he needed help but he only replied ‘no’. Then my boss pulls me aside and explains that in the culture from where he originates it is shameful to ask for help. It is perceived as a failure. So part of the job is to understand and accept other cultures.

What is remarkable about this story is how the narrator does not even consider the possibility that the ‘Indian employee’ did not need any help. As he is an ‘Indian employee’ it is taken for granted that he is in need of help from majority employees and needs to adjust to Danish work place norms. In a similar vein, an employee tells a story of ‘The man who wouldn’t touch bacon’ because he was a Muslim. The story goes on that the ‘Muslim’ would not touch the button ‘bacon’ when serving customers at the counter. Accordingly colleagues had to do this, which slowed down the work process. At last the ‘Muslim’ learned that touching a button named ‘bacon’ did not signify touching pork meat. Other majority crew stories relate to different cultures as inherently patriarchal as the story ‘Professional and personal respect’:

In our restaurant we employ people with another language background to strengthen their Danish skills. Due to their other language background, their religion is also different and rubs off on their perception of girls working here. They have no private respect for girls and this influences their professional respect for female colleagues.

These negative majority crew stories – like the positive stories – all share two significant features: First, they show how ethnic minority colleagues need to conform to majority workplace norms in order to perform, that is confirming the ‘equality as sameness’ logic. However they also show how difference keeps creeping in as all the stories ascribed with certain stereotypic group characteristics that differentiate ethnic minorities from the majority and maintaining an us/them division. They differentiate, however, in whether the story has a happy ending; the positive story of the exceptional minority employee, or the language and cultural differences lingers on; in the negative story about the problematic cultural differences.

Our findings suggest that the local translation of diversity management as ‘equality as sameness’ is in ‘Fastfood’ constantly interrupted by an underlying notion of difference, which makes equality impossible. Here, employee perceptions distinguishing between ‘us and them’ based on minority/majority differences combined with a perception of majority culture being superior is prevalent. This is especially significant when considering how the vast group of managers explicitly link differences to ethnic minority employees (23 stories) characterized by exaggerated positive qualities. Minority members are on the one hand recognized by demonstrating overtly positive characteristics compared to the average majority member by insisting on their differences – in being exceptionally devoted, hard-working and loyal. On the other, managers naturalize own majority norms when describing successful integration when minorities become ‘just like us’. Hence diversity management is then translated into a ‘panoptican’ practice of disciplining, re-socializing, and monitoring minority employees to assimilate to Danish work place culture and what is perceived as acceptable minority behavior.

This picture is somewhat echoed in majority crew members’ perceptions on difference. Roughly half explicitly link differences to ethnic minorities with more or less positive

implications: Minority colleagues are tolerated and included as exotic ‘others’ mostly due to their over-enthusiastic behavior or as being an exotic ingredient ‘spicing up’ the workplace as exceptionally happy, smiling and dancing colleagues. Or they are seen as problematic due to the lack of adequate Danish skills or a significantly different cultural background. The other half of majority crew members (and managers) that link difference to more varied aspects like personality traits, might partly be explained by lack of local exposure to ethnic diversity: While some restaurants located in the big cities in Denmark employ a large number of employees with ethnic minority background, others in more rural areas are characterized by ethnic homogeneity. This bears witness to the restaurants’ attempt to mirror the composition of local citizens among their employees.

Solidarity as social responsibility – and difference

Most of the stories on differences written by managers are essentially stories on corporate social responsibility initiatives taken by the work place (26 out of a total of 33). These manager stories are roughly repeating the same story plot; how the manager takes on the risk of recruiting a disadvantaged person predominantly with refugee and immigrant background – lacking Danish skills and adequate knowledge about Danish workplace culture. After intensive training and parenting by the manager, all the stories have a happy ending with the minority employee eventually adjusting to meet the demands of the work place as their language skills are upgraded together with their professional competences. This is presented as to the mutual benefit; the minority employee might eventually gain a permanent position together with the work place building a more inclusive and tolerant culture. These stories have titles like ‘Under the wings of Fastfood’, ‘Room for everybody’, ‘Fastfood becomes your family’, ‘Everybody can be part of the team’, ‘It is worth it’, ‘Patience pays off’, ‘A new beginning in Denmark’, ‘Integration in a strange country’, and

‘Do a difference’ – just to mention a few. This kind of win-win procurement is summed up in the managerial tale entitled ‘This gives life content’:

Years ago I recruited a girl from Morocco in my restaurant. She did not know a word of Danish. I took the chance and employed her. It turned out to be a fantastic experience for her and for me. The kind of gratitude she shows me I cannot explain. Every day she gives me a big hug. This is an experience that tells me how in ‘Fastfood’ we do not only make a difference in people’s professional life – but in their personal life too.

This is an example of an arch-typical developmental tale based on everyday experiences of restaurant managers, as many of the minority crewmembers enter the organizations on an active labor market scheme for long time unemployed or as part of a language training program or to be accustomed with ‘Danish workplace culture’. This is also the plot in a managerial story about the recruitment of a trainee from Cuba ‘From alcohol to work’; the Cuban used to be an alcoholic but through intensive training, nurturing and personal back-up from the manager, he is eventually integrated in the workplace community, quits drinking and ends up a ‘top motivated’ employee. Another archetypical story is ‘Smiling sunbeam’ on the recruitment of an employee from Vietnam:

He impresses me enormously. He started up in a training position with no Danish skills at all. Later he was employed on a wage subsidy scheme. When he first started it was difficult to communicate with him due to his bad Danish. A difficult childhood made him rather introvert. But we were keen on teaching him Danish and helping him to open up. Now he works more consistent than most of the employees and fight every minute to ensure top performance. Last year he was awarded employee of the year and is a certified trainer. Everybody loves him because of his big smile and positive attitude. He is taking on a Danish way of life and is the perfect employee.

The managerial stories all share the common theme describing minorities in positive but still inferior ways in need of help from patient majority managers, which have the empathy and resources to take on the responsibility of both the professional and personal

‘upgrading’. The stories often have a paternalistic twist of ‘how they [minorities] need to be kept in place’ as cited from the manager story with the title ‘Diversity and development of the individuals’. These stories describe minorities as unruly, uncivilized kids that have to be cultivated and disciplined by a parental managerial authority to their own advantage. This managerial perception of on-boarding as a kind of ‘bringing up’ new employees might be adequate to most newly recruited majority employees who are predominantly youngsters with no prior education or labor market experiences. But most of the minority newcomers with refugee and immigrant background are in fact older and have prior training and labor market experiences predominantly from other countries, which make the paternalistic attitude seem odd and skewed.

When diversity management is founded on a principle of social responsibility, then newly appointed ethnic minority members are positioned in provisional and publicly funded positions, giving them a lower status than majority members in permanent positions. This is an inherently unequal power relation positioning minorities in a weak position in need of help from a tolerant and benevolent majority manager or supervisor who can help the minority member unfold his or her potential. What is more, an unequal hierarchy is established disadvantaging minority employees to the detriment of the valuation of their unique competences. Hence the thinking behind corporate social responsibility fosters inferior ways of perceiving and treating minority employees. This is also illustrated in the next story by a manager about his experience of employing minority crew in training positions:

They start up in the kitchen where they get to know Danes. They have a tendency to use their spare time with others from their home country. We offer them a Danish community, which means a lot to them... we have plenty of these stories that illustrate what we are able to do in ‘Fastfood’. We do not judge people in advance, but leave room for everybody. Our talented managers and employees can turn the most miserable fates into success stories.

In this story the minority employee embodies the ‘miserable fates’ being turned into a success story by well-meaning and talented majority managers and crew, attaching professionalism and resources to the majority ‘we’ helping out the unaccomplished minority ‘them’. In a similar story; ‘Make a difference!’ a manager describes how it is ‘such a good feeling to help people that need a friendly “push” in the right direction’ when employing people in training positions. What is more, these stories also tell a moral story about how ‘Fastfood’ cares about an inclusive labor market, act as good corporate citizen, and do the ‘dirty work’ on minority integration other Danish firms often refrain from. Hence diversity is portrayed as an imperative like in the story ‘Diversity, not a choice, but a necessity for the team’:

Diversity is a responsibility we must take on. Through our ‘Fastfood’ upbringing we have been trained to give back to the local community that we are part of. In ‘Fastfood’ we do a lot to help people enter the labor market. No matter background and age. Some eventually gets a permanent position while others are geared for the labor market outside ‘Fastfood’.

Hence ‘Fastfood’ as an organization and the (majority) managers are characterized as morally and ethically correct, believing in empowerment and the potential of every human/citizen. Accordingly, differences are not valued for the sake of differences (related to professionalism and business performance), but for the sake of morality, charity and compassionate majority behavior – leading to a restored internal and external image, for instance echoed in how a restaurant manager portrays ‘his’ restaurant:

It makes me proud that my managers and employees can help people. It is so easy to say ‘no, I don’t’ want to engage in these people because it is too cumbersome’. My employees are so patient, indulgent and prepared to help different people, which I find very touching.

Our findings here suggest that diversity management is translated into ‘paternalism’ with employers as surrogate parents invoking the family metaphor behind the welfare logic of

social responsibility. This conflicts with the original diversity logic praising individualism and every employee possessing a unique set of interests and competencies to be unfolded to the competitive advantage to the firm. The logic of solidarity as social responsibility therefore marginalizes minorities in a weak position of dependency and in demand of help to be integrated, leading to a de-legitimization of their professional competences. What is more, the original value of corporate voluntary action promoting diversity as a business potential is shifted to an appropriate and compulsive corporate behavior through institutionalizing efforts by policy makers and labor market stakeholder.

Concluding discussion: Reintroducing the value of difference into diversity management

A growing number of diversity studies critically analyze diversity discourses. However, these studies are mostly interested in deconstructing the managerial and utilitarian conception of differences while sidelining the social justice arguments and obscuring structural inequalities in access to power and resources, which can be seen as the real causes of any diversity problematic (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005; Tatli, 2011). This article serves to address this omission by analyzing the ambiguous translation of diversity management in Danish corporations as filtered by the welfare logics of equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility. We will as a conclusion show how difference can be brought into an understanding of diversity management still embedded in the Scandinavian welfare logic of equality and solidarity in order to change the current affirmative strategies of diversity management towards transformative ones. This is done by drawing on insights from Fraser's affirmative and transformative strategies to redress injustices of misrecognition and maldistribution (Fraser, 1998; Fraser & Honneth, 2003).

Interpreted through Fraser's conceptualization, diversity management translated through equality as sameness and solidarity as social responsibility in the Danish context can be seen as an affirmative strategy to redress misrecognition and maldistribution. In Fraser's conceptualization affirmative strategies are meant to disturb inequitable outcomes of social arrangements without circumventing the underlying framework that generates them (Fraser, 1998). In a Danish context, diversity management as an affirmative strategy does not even disturb the logic of equality as sameness – quite the opposite it is disturbed by and distorted beyond recognition by the underlying welfare logics. Instead of valuing differences, diversity management is reinforcing group differences by highlighting the distinction between the benevolent and skilled majority, and the lacking and deficient minority. As the stories from 'Fastfood' showed, the differences minority employees bring into the organization are either problematized or stereotyped into group qualities (the picture-perfect or exotic other) disregarding the potential professional qualities of difference. This means that minority employees can't obtain equality as they are inherently different while still expected to assimilate to majority norms to demonstrate their willingness to integrate.

At the core of this problematic is the problem of translating diversity management into corporate social responsibility by means of the welfare system. On the one hand diversity management seeks to redress misrecognition by revaluing difference, which serves to consolidate majority/minority differences. On the other hand, corporate social responsibility is fundamentally aimed at redressing economic maldistribution by abolishing the distinction between majority and minority. Hence their combination brings on an unfruitful distinction between contributing/benevolent majority and the needy/greedy minority. Solidarity then becomes sectarian, and valorizing differences –

hence highlighting majority/minority differences – becomes the means of further misrecognition.

The Danish variant of diversity management into social responsibility demonstrates how the structural injustice needs to be remedied, if diversity management shall not end up having counter-productive effects. According to Fraser this is by means of transformative strategies aimed at circumventing institutions and social practices; they have to be replaced by more justice productive structures blurring and eventually eliminating class distinctions and attached cultural valorization making way for equal citizen status ensuring participatory parity (Fraser & Honneth, 2003). The value of difference needs then to be re-conceptualized with positive connotation attached to diverse competencies whilst doing away with the yoke of social responsibility. Hence minorities have to be introduced to the labor market due to their professional skills and competencies, which inevitable rests on a reformulation of equality as sameness to that of differentiated equality and a solidarity moving beyond the ethnic differences. We illustrate such movement from affirmative to transformative diversity management in table 3.

Table 3: Affirmative and transformative diversity initiatives

	Affirmative diversity	Transformative diversity
Equality as sameness	zing differences in diversity ement at the risk of re- alization	Reconceptualization of diverse competencies – differentiated equality
Solidarity as social responsibility	Access to labor market through differential treatment at the risk of misrecognition	Cross-cutting solidarity to move beyond ethnic differences

Fraser's transformative strategies definitely have a long way to go in a Danish context. But her thinking about the entanglement of misrecognition and maldistribution, and remedying these by means of affirmative strategies might have unanticipated consequences, are valuable to critically examine in the Danish context: No matter how well-intended, combining diversity with social responsibility does not redress structural injustices of a majority biased labor market. Quite the opposite social responsibility as an affirmative strategy to redress maldistribution through labor market integration only further the division between contributing majority and receiving minority, hence supporting patterns of misrecognition (Fraser, 1998).

None the less, whether applying affirmative or transformative strategies to remedy structural injustices, we end up in Fraser's redistribution-recognition dilemma: How can we ask to abolish differentiation on the basis of ethnicity in the quest for participatory parity at labor market, and simultaneously promote the value of (ethnic) difference as imbued in the concept of diversity management? Diversity management is hence a difficult navigation between the 'Scylla' of, on the one hand use of essentialist 'stereotypical' demographic categories, and on the 'Charybdis' of individualistic, politically-dissolving categories. For instance Litvin (1997) argues against the use of categories when crafting diversity activities as they can be divisive rather than inclusive by overemphasizing (group based) differences. Noon (2007) on the contrary criticizes diversity management for marginalizing the importance of equality and suppressing the significance of ethnicity in the workplace by focusing exclusively on individual and personal identity traits imbued in the business case. Diversity management is then 'a story of how to obtain both equality and business success; it depicts a win-win situation where these two perspectives are united' (Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004, p. 532), which might be a fairytale far from corporate reality. This is neither alleviated by means of 'colorblind diversity policies'

to overcome stereotypic group relations nor by 'identity conscious' promoting social justice and articulation of historically based structural and power related inequalities (Holck et al., 2015). Our analysis demonstrates how diversity management initiatives can only meaningfully be 'disassembled' by a historical-contemporary contextualization to understand its fallacies and to translate these into meaningful changes. An abstract, non-situated conceptualization might even lead to suggestions reinforcing the marginal labor market status of minority groups that diversity management is meant to alleviate.

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6. Unequal by structure

Abstract

This ethnographic study of diversity in a team-based, post-bureaucratic municipal center demonstrates how inequality is structurally embedded in post-bureaucratic features of adaptability and informality. The findings contradict key assumptions common among critical diversity scholars, who argue that bureaucracy results in inequality and that post-bureaucratic, collaborative organizations are more prone to equality. In the focal organization, diversity is constrained by structural tensions of: (1) escalating differentiation of an adaptable form, which challenges efforts of coordination; and (2) integration measures in the double structure of formal and informal hierarchies, which result in peer competition and the emergence of peer elites. These findings highlight a need to expand the scope of diversity research and advocate for a situated, structural approach that moves beyond stylized typologies. A more complexity-sensitive conceptualization is proposed in which the degree of structure is situationally adjusted to the need for emancipative practices. Given this background, I argue that diversity researchers and practitioners must pay more attention to the constraining and enabling potentialities of every organizational structure and form.

Keywords

Diversity, post-bureaucracy, critical ethnography, emancipatory organizations.

Introduction

In research on critical diversity and, in particular, feminism, a bureaucratic form of organization is commonly assumed to be a structural manifestation of male domination that privileges the few – usually white men – at the expense of the many. This perspective also suggests that an informal, collaborative post-bureaucratic form of organization is more conducive to equality (e.g., Acker, 2006; Calás and Smircich, 1999; Crowley, 2014; Dai, 2014; D’Enbeau and Buzzanell, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Oswick and Noon, 2014; Mamman et al., 2012; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Zaroni, 2011). On the other hand, critical management scholars suggest that the post-bureaucratic structure, which encompasses formal and informal hierarchies, resulting in peer elites and peer competition to the detriment of equality (e.g., Courpasson and Clegg, 2006; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Hodson et al., 2013; Mast, 2008; Ollilainen and Calasanti, 2007; Vallas, 2003).

Drawing on arguments distinguishing between those who celebrate post-bureaucracy as a guarantee of equality and those who criticize its outcomes, this study explores the link between organizational structure and diversity in a post-bureaucratic municipal center, which I refer to as ‘Agency’¹¹. Agency is renowned for its diversity profile, and its ethnically diverse and specialized workforce. However, it is also haunted by poor employee satisfaction – almost 30% of its workforce report experiences of harassment and bullying from managers and coworkers. These instances are associated with such elements as language, skin color and ethnicity (employee satisfaction report, September 2014). These experiences closely relate to two distinguished post-bureaucratic features generating structural tensions: (1) escalating differentiation, which challenges efforts of coordination, and (2) the double hierarchy of informal collaboration and formal authority, which results in peer competition and the emergence of peer elites.

¹¹ The name of the organization has been changed to protect its identity.

These observations contradict key assumptions found in critical diversity research, which argues that a post-bureaucratic, democratic and collaborative organization, such as Agency, should promote diversity by means of its structural setup. However, this study does not aim to negate the possible benefits of the bureaucratic or the post-bureaucratic form. Rather, the aims are to demonstrate that organizing workforce diversity *is not* a matter of organizational form *per se*, and to show that every organizational structure has the potential to both enable and constrain the organization of diversity.

This study contributes to contemporary diversity research by proposing a need for a more open-minded search for durable organizing principles that adequately address the complexities of workforce diversity (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014). Inspired by Ashcraft's (2001, 2006) concept of organized dissonance and research on hybrid organizations (Battilana and Lee, 2014; Pache and Santos, 2013), this article investigates how the organization of workforce diversity involves a constant, but productive, struggle to situationally adjust the organizational structure to ensure that all organizational members have the possibility to participate on par with each other.

This article unfolds in the following way. First, the theoretical framework, which combines diversity research with organizational theory on structure and form, is drawn up to structure the analysis and position the study. Thereafter, the analytical method and strategy are presented, as is the research site. Next, I analyze how the structural tensions of escalating differentiation and attempts to integrate informality and formality intersect with disparity in Agency. Finally, the contributions, including implications for practice, are discussed in relation to the crafting of more emancipatory organizations that are capable of navigating the tensions associated with diversity in a post-bureaucratic or bureaucratic organizational form.

Structurally assessing workplace diversity: Renewing the agenda

A perception that organizational structures critically shape disadvantage at the workplace began to emerge in the late 1970s, spearheaded by critical feminist research on gendered organizations (e.g., Acker 2006; Ashcraft, 2001, 2006; Calás and Smircich, 1999; Dai, 2014; D'Enbeau and Buzzanell, 2013) and by sociologists' efforts to bring the organization (back) into social-stratification research (e.g., Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Vallas and Cummings 2014). Two of the strongest formative voices in this regard are Acker (2006) and Tilly (1998). Acker (2006) claims that every organization, even those with explicit egalitarian goals, develops its own unique inequality regime over time. That regime comprises the job-, class- and status-based social relations within the workplace. Tilly (1998) explores how social inequality acquires persistency from processes of exploitation and opportunity hoarding through which social groups limit competition for the privileges they enjoy.

However, scholars of organizational power and inequality have long disputed whether the bureaucratic form or the post-bureaucratic organizational form enhance or mitigate inequality to the greatest extent. Some researchers, especially feminist organizational scholars, suggest that the team-based, collaborative structures and more porous job boundaries of the post-bureaucracy have the potential to reduce women's and minorities' disadvantages by giving them more opportunities for visibility, relations and interactions, thereby controverting stereotypes (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2014; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Crowley, 2014; Dai, 2014; D'Enbeau and Buzzanell, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2011; Zanoni, 2011). Others view bureaucracy as a way of securing reliable decision making and accountability, and as a moral institution committed to an ethos of neutrality that acts as a buffer against the partiality of the self-appointed elites who haunt post-bureaucratic organizations (e.g., Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Hodson

et al., 2013; Mars, 2008; Parsons et al., 2012). Furthermore, they argue that the post-bureaucratic, collaborative form relies on social relations at work and, therefore, relaxes the rules governing job assignments, which allows for the emergence of self-appointed elites and for bias to creep into personnel decisions (Clegg, 2011; du Gay, 2000; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004; Ollilainen and Calasanti, 2007; Varman and Chakrabarti, 2004; Reed, 2011).

On the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic forms

The debate over the bureaucratic and post-bureaucratic organizational forms has been formative for organizational scholarship in general. It dates back to classical organizational theory and is associated with the question of how much structure is beneficial for organizational performance. From the initial discussion of scientific management to recent analyses of contingency theory and hybrid organizations, organizational structure has been perceived as a tool for controlling organizational output in response to turbulent and unpredictable environments. This has led to two archetypical organizational forms, which are frequently referred to as mechanic and organic (Burns and Stalker, 1961), machine (or professional) bureaucracy and adhocracy (Mintzberg, 1993), or bureaucracy and post-bureaucracy (e.g., Courpasson and Clegg, 2006; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; du Gay, 2000, 2011; Reed, 2011).

Coined by Weber in the early 1900s, the *bureaucratic* form was traditionally viewed as a way to effectively bring an end to nepotism and patrimonialism by means of rigid accountability in the form of a rule-bound, vertical hierarchy (Clegg, 2011). At its core are the *neutral and uniform rules* and procedures that regulate all parts of the ‘bureau’, giving it a predictable but rigid form. Therefore, bureaucracy is predominantly viewed as offering the best fit for stable environments (Hodson et al., 2013). Another core element is the *formal impartiality* of the ‘bureaucrat’, which relies on the principle of meritocracy

and on formal role systems with centralized responsibilities, which are assumed to produce fairness through objective universalism. In the twenty-first century, the bureaucracy has simultaneously become the hegemonic organizational form *and* the target of criticisms ranging from ‘red-tape’ mentalities to totalitarianism (du Gay, 2000, 2011; Reed, 2011).

The post-bureaucratic, collaborative form both contradicts and replicates various elements of the orthodox bureaucracy (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011; Reed, 2011). While the formal vertical hierarchy remains intact, it is supplemented with a horizontal hierarchy of teams and collaborative structures. This softens rule-bound rigidity through the introduction of more flexible structures capable of adequately responding to the needs of the increasingly complex environment that most present-day organizations experience (Du Gay, 2000; Clegg, 2011). However, the post-bureaucratic form gives rise to two inherent tensions that are highly relevant when organizing diversity. First, adaptability manifests as the acceleration of differentiation with the aim of tackling complexity, which increases the need for integration to ensure that efforts are coordinated. Second, integration measures in the double hierarchy of formality-informality bring about peer competition and the emergence of peer elites to the detriment of employees’ sense of fairness and equal opportunity.

Navigating the tension of accelerated differentiation

One key feature of the post-bureaucratic form is an adaptive and responsive structure, which is geared toward tackling an increasingly complex organizational environment. In response to critics of bureaucracy, who scorn its rigidity, the flexibility of the post-bureaucratic form has been advocated as appropriate for fast adjustments to changing circumstances (du Gay, 2000; Hodson et al., 2013; Reed, 2011).

Organizational scholars generally agree that organizations are situated within an environmental context. Regardless of whether that context is viewed as a social construct or a factual situation, actors operate with and are responsive to perceptions of an organizational environment. Those perceptions guide decision making and everyday interactions (Vikkelsø, 2014). In line with the conventional wisdom of the contingency school, any organization must be structurally arranged and managed in a way that best corresponds to a number of situational factors in order to be effective. The essential requirements of an organization vary depending on the nature of the task, the environmental characteristics and the disposition of its members (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). Therefore, an organization must be adapted to the world that its employees (believe they) are facing by means of an appropriate differentiation of tasks, functions, sections and teams. Inevitably, such differentiation is accompanied by coordination problems (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967: 12). The contingency thought is thus based on the balancing of two antagonistic principles: the necessity of *appropriate differentiation* and the need for *requisite integration* to efficiently coordinate the collective effort in order to perform a common task given various environmental aspects (Vikkelsø, 2014).

Contingency thinking remains formative for research on organizational form. For instance, Ashcraft's (2001) concept of organized dissonance, as well as recent research on organizational ambidexterity (e.g., Raisch et al., 2009) and hybrid organizations (e.g., Battilana and Lee, 2014; Pache and Santos, 2013) use the strategic union of the antagonistic features of differentiation and integration. Ashcraft (2001) describes organized dissonance in conjunction with 'feminist bureaucracy' in which the tensions between the bureaucratic form and the feminist, collaborative form advance the organization's reflexivity on its structure. From that perspective, the blending of bureaucratic universalism with post-bureaucratic particularism facilitates mutual accountability and democratic participation (Ashcraft, 2001, 2006).

This study, which is inspired by contingency thinking, argues that a diverse workforce increases the need for requisite integration. Apart from more conventional differentiation related to tasks, functions, sections and teams aimed at adjusting to environmental complexity, workforce diversity adds to the internal complexity related to such elements as ethnicity, gender, culture, language, personality, age, work experience and professional background. Therefore, the escalating differentiation of the organization's external and internal environments, which I collapse into the term 'situational complexity', brings about a need for a more varied set of integration measures to promote unity of effort. Without such measures, the organization will slowly dissolve. Measures of requisite integration endow certain potentialities in organizational members' actions that bring about at least some degree of routinized, predictable actions – a predictability that helps employees pick a course of action for tackling situational complexity (Pentland et al., 2012). However, this contradicts the conventional wisdom of escalating differentiation as a way to handle ongoing change by critics of the bureaucracy (Clegg, 2011; Hodson et al., 2013).

Navigating the tension of formal and informal hierarchies

The requisite integration measures that an organization introduces to temper the excesses of escalating differentiation are important. This brings us to another key element of the post-bureaucratic form – *decentralized informality*. Decentralized informality of authority refers to the idea that all members are, in principle, equal. According to post-bureaucratic proponents, quasi-autonomous teams, self-managing projects and decentralized work units should supersede old forms of formal power and control. This allows for high discretion in task performance and for justice by particularism (case-by-case), which in turn encourage more lateral forms of participation (Weick, 2001). The collaborative structure is characterized by the minimal formalization of tasks, roles and rules, and by

low levels of standardization. Complex systems of rules are substituted with guidelines for action taking the form of *principles* (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006; Reed, 2011). However, management's rights and responsibilities are largely left intact, which reinforces top-down power relations. Post-bureaucratic organizations are thus characterized by two integration measures that run in parallel: a formal hierarchy of line management and fluid, patchy clusters of teams, which infuse the organization with indirect and individualized forms of power and control by mutual adjustment (Clegg, 2011; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011).

Paradoxically, attempts to reduce hierarchies have resulted in the dual hierarchy that characterizes the post-bureaucracy form. Moreover, this form introduces an additional layer of differentiation. Employees have to handle a demanding combination of formal and informal pressures by adhering to the formal lines of authority while navigating team-based informality, constantly positioning themselves and bargaining with, and against, fellow team members (Du Gay, 2000; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004). Therefore, teams encompass a strong informal principle of continuous hierarchical positioning (Mars, 2008; Ollilainen and Calasanti, 2007; Varman and Chakrabarti, 2004), which often involves the application of micro-political strategies by groups of employees to further their own interests (Acker, 2006; Crowley, 2014; Kalev, 2009; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2011). Consequently, informal leaders and followers arise over time to fill the power void in the absence of formal lines of authority (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011).

This study suggests that the kind of integrational means utilized to tackle escalating differentiation in a post-bureaucratic organization are a key concern for diversity practitioners. In particular, these researchers need to pay close attention to the fact that integrative measures, which are meant to coordinate, may instead further escalate

differentiation. This negatively affects opportunities to participate as peers for all organizational employees.

Research design

This study explores how organizational structures constrain diversity work in Agency. This research aim necessitates a close relationship with the setting as well as a critical reading of the organizational context in an attempt to reveal deep structures of asymmetric relations of power and control. In practice, a critical ethnographic approach is required (Duberley and Johnson, 2011; Watson, 2011). Ethnography is defined by Van Maanen (2011) as the result of the ethnographer's efforts to describe what he or she experiences in immersive, lengthy participant observations in the field. This involves 'thick descriptions' focused on detailed empirical data as well as interpretive efforts that go beyond or beneath specific manifestations by interpreting layers of meaning (van Maanen, 2011). Apart from conventional ethnography aimed at portraying informants' worldviews, this study also challenge these worldviews, as it aims to expose oppressive behaviors (Duberley and Johnson, 2011). To do so, traditional ethnographic data-generating techniques of participative observation and interviews are supplement with interventions. Interventions serve the dual aims of continuously testing and challenging the researchers' assumptions and findings, and of giving back to the organization while the findings are still relevant. However, in Agency, interventions also encourage participant reflections on the potential to transform widely taken-for-granted modes of organizing workforce diversity (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Watson, 2011).

The research is based on an iterative design in which research questions are formulated and reformulated throughout the fieldwork phase, thereby creating space for empirical material to affect the research process and results (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011). Therefore, the study is situated in an interpretive frame that acknowledges the constructed

and relational nature of fieldwork and research (Ahonen et al., 2014; Belhoste and Monin, 2013; Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011; Van der Brink and Benschop, 2011).

Research site

Agency is a municipal center that counsels international businesses and entrepreneurs on local issues. It was founded in 2008 with eight employees. When this study's fieldwork began in May 2012, it had just been moved to a new municipal department, where it was merged with another unit employing 85 people. In September 2013, the center's size was cut to 35 employees, as part of it was moved to another unit. By the time the fieldwork ended in May 2014, Agency was undergoing yet another merger, which would triple its size under a new name and department.

Agency successfully applies the municipal diversity and equality policy, which almost solely focuses on recruitment strategies aimed at ensuring that staff composition mirrors the demographic composition in the municipal area. Therefore, Agency's employees differ according to age, gender, ethnicity, language skills and cultural experiences, and they vary from autodidact entrepreneurs to masters of human and political sciences. Most of the employees with an international background enter Agency through an active labor-market scheme, which aims to move the unemployed into temporary, publicly funded training positions. In other words, diversity is coupled with corporate social responsibility, and newly appointed 'diverse' employees are largely in provisional jobs. Therefore, employees are divided according to work contracts mixing permanent and temporary staff.

The workplace culture centers on evoking an entrepreneurial spirit through an open-plan office space, a free-seating policy, and a collaborative, team-based mode of organizing characterized by a lack of formality and few rules. On the one hand, therefore, employees

have a high degree of discretion when performing their specialized, mostly project- and team-based work. On the other hand, the formal municipal bureaucratic hierarchy is kept in place through formal top-down power. Managers hold discretion in decisions on task allocation, promotion, and recruitment. The municipal bureaucracy bestows the job titles, which divide employees into an internal hierarchy of chief- and project consultants, advisors, and administrative and student staff. The organization has historically maintained a decentralized hierarchy with a CEO (a male) and three middle managers (two males and a female) making up the managing board, although this varies in line with to the organization's size.

Fieldwork in Agency

The ethnographic fieldwork draws on a wide range of data-generation methods (van Maanen, 2011) to gain deep insight into Agency's organizing principles and employees' perceptions of issues related to diversity, disparity and hierarchy. The bulk of the empirical data was collected during a nine-month period when the researcher occupied a desk at Agency twice a week (November 2012-July 2013). Different situationally suitable data-generation techniques were applied to accommodate variations in the types of data. These techniques predominantly focused on participant observations, interviews and interventions.

Ethnographic participant observations were undertaken in multiple, routine meeting forums, such as center, department, team and management meetings. In addition, a series of job interviews, two center-wide workshops and ad-hoc social gatherings were observed. These daily observations were recorded in a fieldwork diary, which constitutes a significant part of the data.

Semi-structured interviews were guided by the initial participant observations. I undertook semi-structured interviews with 18 employees and managers, each of which lasted from 30 to 120 minutes. Participants were asked to describe their daily work patterns, and to relate them to issues of status and privilege/disadvantage in the organization, the work culture, and the cooperative environment in terms of information sharing, task distribution, decision-making processes and socializing. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. For an overview of interviewees see Table 1, which provides fictive but representative impressions for the sake of respondent anonymity.

Table 1: Overview of interviewees in Agency

Alias	Background	Sex	Education	Job
Aya	Spanish	F	Human science	International consultant Initially in training position but in permanent position after six months
Eva	Local	F	Political science	Section manager
Eske	Local	M	Political Science	Consultant with political-strategic tasks (Union representative)
Axel	Local	M	Master in Arts	Chief consultant and advisor
Cam	Korea	F	Business Diploma	Ethnic consultant in training position
Carl	Local	M	Political Science	CEO
Jens	Local	M	Political Science	Section manager
Tor	Local	M	Political Science	Chief Consultant /political-strategic tasks
Batul	Former Yugoslavia	F	Business Diploma	Ethnic consultant
Lise	Local	F	Accountant	Trainee position
Bo	Local	M	Technical Training	Chief consultant and advisor

Aku	Algerian	M	Business Diploma	Ethnic consultant
Raawija	Turkish-Danish	F	Humane science	Consultant with political-strategic tasks and union representative
Dan	Local	M	Graphic designer	Chief consultant and advisor
Mie	Local	F	Social Science	Chief consultant with political-strategic tasks
Mani	India	M	Formerly self-employed	Ethnic consultant
Ea	Local	F	Political science	Chief Consultant with political-strategic tasks
Ade	Tunisian-Danish	M	Political Science	Project position

Interventions offered a possibility to test the reliability of the data and the researcher's presumptions through presentations, seminars, participation in debates, informal talks and one written report. The interventions culminated in a three-day seminar and two follow-up seminars on collaborative patterns and team structures, which were held in one particular section at that section's request. The seminar was facilitated by the researcher and planned together with a committee consisting of employee representatives and the section manager. The seminars aimed at initiating collective reflection on the pattern of cooperation, as employees were concerned with how similar attractions guided collaboration in a way that was counterproductive to diversity values. The seminars led to the formulation of a plan for rotating teamwork, which was never effectuated.

Analytical strategy

The ethnographic methods provided deep insight into how members dealt with organizational change, as well as how the parallel structure of informal-formality affected cooperation and socialization patterns among employees. After an exploratory phase,

findings and understandings from the initial observations and interviews were organized into emergent themes, which were then used as inputs in new interviews, both in terms of the questions asked and in respondent selection. They were also used in the planning of interventions. Consequently, the emerging understanding of diversity processes in Agency affected the lines of inquiry (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2011).

An iterative method was applied that vacillated between fieldwork observation, interviews and interventions, reviews of extant theory, and data coding in order to condense meaning, and to generate new theoretical and empirical questions. When processing the data, the researcher translated the interviews into English. To analyze participative observations, interviews, and interventions, a qualitative content analysis was applied, inspired by narrative analysis (Essers, 2009). The content analysis was carried out by splitting the data into relatively small units of content on the basis of themes. Initially, I began by scanning the data and isolating the words and phrases connected to ‘formal and informal hierarchy’, ‘experiences of change’, and events and observations illustrative of how the employees tackled turbulence and lines of authority.

In the second round of coding, I paid particular attention to producing adequate themes. In this regard, I assigned content to the two structural dimensions. First, the tension of escalating differentiation was traced in emerging themes on members’ perceptions of organizational change, and in how the structural setup prompted members’ enactments of either flow and continuity or continuous disruption and stress when dealing with changes. In addition, I focused on how this affected cooperation patterns and the ability to tackle colleagues’ diversity. Second, the tensions associated with integrating formality and informality were traced in emerging themes on the blurred lines between formal and informal authority, and how this related to perceptions of organizational fairness and

unequal opportunities in relation to task distribution, promotions, and other crucial organizational decisions and practices.

Findings

In this section, I present my findings on how the post-bureaucratic structures in Agency constrain diversity and equality. The first analysis explores how Agency's adaptive structure ensures that the organizational response to continuous change is not one of integration aimed at promoting coordination but one of accelerating differentiation in a way that is counterproductive to diversity. The second analysis explores how the double structure of formality and informality results in peer competition and the emergence of peer elites, which impede employees' abilities to participate on par with each other.

Escalating differentiation to tackle situational complexity

In many ways, Agency is characterized by a responsive, flexible form that results from its history of constantly adapting to upsizing or downsizing, mergers and restructurings. The political climate makes Agency the target of frequent restructurings, a tendency that is enhanced by the municipal system and by the CEO's fondness for internal redesign. Despite the organization's rapid growth, its history of being relatively small and informal and based on casual and random information sharing has lingered on, according to Dan:

We have witnessed violent restructurings. We have moved from being “ten men on a raft” to 80 members today. When you experience massive external pressure, when the world is constantly shifting – that is when you have to build up walls, secure internal coherence to face the turbulence, and create internal trust and solidarity in order to be a more resilient organization. But the opposite is happening.

Notably, the organization does not respond to the restructurings, mergers and internal redesigns by strengthening integration measures to further internal coordination. This puts a significant amount of pressure on the employees, who are constantly involved in

activities aimed at reassembling the organization. As Eva, a section manager, reflects: 'Throughout the autumn, I kept wondering what kind of madness the next week would bring. Internal chaos and stress are the outcome of all of these restructurings'. According to Weick (2001), if work flow is constantly interrupted by perceptions of ongoing change or expectations of changes that never come about, then most of the employees' mental capacity is engaged in troubleshooting and navigating the situation. Along these lines, Tor recounts how the employees find themselves in an endless, vicious circle of reassembling the organization:

I do not know where we are going anymore. What kind of agenda do we have? What characterizes Agency in the long term? Can we just get some peace to get our work done? This situation is extremely demotivating; I sit and produce paper, but no action. I produce paper for nothing.

Most of the employees express frustration with the continuous change and the perception that their work seems meaningless. This situation leads to a combination of apathy and employees withdrawing to their own, isolated tasks in smaller teams in order to avoid being 'disturbed' by the need to coordinate with the organization's center. Accordingly, employees dig trenches and fortify in silos with similar co-workers in order to establish some kind of certainty in an otherwise 'fluid' organization. This is reflected in Axel's description of his team:

It is scary to realize that we are incredibly similar and nothing separates us. We have exactly the same backgrounds, education and work experiences. We work together as a team every day. We know exactly what the other team members will answer and exactly what we will get from them. The silos have always been here. However, when we were smaller, we did share knowledge, even if it was arbitrary and incomplete. That is not the situation anymore.

Cooperative patterns reflect a quest for predictability, stability and high levels of trust. As Weick (2001:40) suggests, 'when a large group is under pressure, stable pairwise

interactions will become the most common structure'. A context of continual change leaves few employee resources available for crafting an inclusive climate, and employees withdraw to cooperative patterns in teams guided by similar attractions and long-term cooperation. This is also Ade's experience:

We are very mixed *and* very segregated. Just watch how people sit together and the free-seating pattern. We are divided between "the real Danes" and the foreigners in the way we sit, cooperate and socialize.

Solidarity is thus limited to selected groups of coworkers, and it arises from the interdependence among group members. This interdependence brings about feelings of predictability, security and stability, which are necessary if employees are to continue performing their individual and shared tasks. They know they will not be challenged by diverse thinking or experiences. However, most employees recognize that this is contrary to the organizational values of diversity and the aim of creating a 'learning culture'. The turbulence apparently leaves the members exhausted, and the changes they long for never materialize. One section used my presence to challenge what they described as collaborative patterns guided by similar attractions. Accordingly, several seminars were held on the issue and the section members collectively formulated a plan for rotating teams to explore and exploit their various skills and knowledge. However, the plan was never effectuated, apparently due to internal chaos, as Cam describes:

It is extremely demotivating because we can see everything we have done in these collaborative seminars and our efforts to find some common values – the areas in which we excel. That is all gone, and we certainly have no team spirit left. People are going in opposite directions. It is demoralizing for all of us. It did make a lot of fuss, but it just crumbled to pieces afterwards.

As employee experiences in Agency illustrate, the kind of structural measures applied to respond to continuous change are not indifferent – structures forcefully shape the possible actions and conventions of the employees. In Agency, the employees' main goal is to

temper the excesses of uncertainty, as uncertainty becomes a source of power and an opportunity for more subtle power struggles. However, employees have to deal with escalating differentiation by means of informal integration measures, which lead to further segmentation and disintegration, as recounted by Mie:

What do you do, when you have members who feel that they are in the middle of a void? How do you create responsibility and engagement? How do you respond to their demands for more structured knowledge sharing, more transparency in task distribution and promotions? Well, management does nothing, really.

In this situation, formalized structures could offset and reduce some of the uncertainty that situational complexity – including workforce diversity – inevitably introduces. As proposed by contingency scholars, measures of requisite integration bring about repetitive and predictable interaction patterns, which help actors cope with uncertainty. They also entail formalized roles and rules that not only guide interaction but also create direction and an experience of continuity in the face of ongoing change. Moreover, they make many simultaneous activities mutually consistent and, hence, create unity in effort, while they also establish regularities, anchor points and navigation strongholds, thereby enhancing participative parity for a diverse workforce (Pentland et al., 2012). In contrast, Agency's employees experience escalating differentiation and endless segmentation of the organization, a sense that their activities lack meaning and a lack of unity in efforts to accomplish shared tasks, which are essential elements of organizing and organizations (Vikkelsø, 2014).

Integration measures in a formal-informal hierarchy

Despite the acute need for persistency to temper the excesses of escalating differentiation, the post-bureaucratic structural setup of Agency results in another effect of requisite integration. The double structure of formality and informality in post-bureaucratic

organizations, which is meant to soften the rigidity of municipal bureaucratic rules, roles and procedures, creates room for lines of authority to be blurred. Consequently, employees experience enhanced internal peer competition coupled with double standards of limited accountability (Šliwa and Johansson, 2014). According to Eske, the top management formally communicates collaborative values. However, these values are predominantly related to internal affairs, where collaborative structures are encouraged. For example, the internal seminars on identity formulation and an attractive workplace, which aim to address increasing levels of employee dissatisfaction, are largely left to collective action. They receive little management attention and, hence, have little organizational impact. At the same time, the CEO actualizes the top-down authority vested in him by the formal hierarchy:

He directly distributes orders and assignments to employees. This is highly problematic, as he bypasses the formal hierarchy of line management. He has an apparent lack of respect for the organizational setup. Power relations then arise between colleagues that should not be there, because they step into a management space and act as managers even though they do not have the formal responsibilities and authority. This creates an unsound power situation.

Therefore, by vacillating between democratic and autocratic practices, management can strategically either refer to the ethics of collaborative informality or the objectivity of a formal hierarchy based on opportunistic considerations. By sidestepping the formal hierarchy, top management creates internal competition among the employees to carry out the CEO's orders via informal channels. The double structure of formality-informality infuses a double hierarchy of formal management and informal 'elite peers'. The latter group encompasses top managements' insiders, who are endowed with a privileged status through the fact that they directly refer to the CEO. Agency becomes an arena of micro-politics in which employees act strategically and form alliances to either countervail or make use of the power assigned to the informal elite peers. In other words, they act not in

the interest of unified task performance but in pursuit of individual opportunities (Courpasson and Clegg, 2006).

Accordingly, collaborative patterns both grant and block access to privilege, which may account for why the seminar on cooperative patterns became a highly politicized endeavor. Prior to the seminar, the planning committee divided the section members into groups based on who usually worked together. This exercise created a widespread outcry and resentment even before the seminar commenced. The reaction perplexed the committee members, including Eske:

It was an odd, but noteworthy, general response to the group exercise: “I do not want to be part of that group... I will not be identified with that group. It is a little less significant than the others”. It is incredible that people reacted so strongly even though they all recognized the groups. I guess it has something to do with a desire to signal membership in a particular league.

In the collaborative organization, employees must strive for informal dominance or at least participate to some extent in the daily struggle for survival because their formal positions do not automatically provide security (Mars, 2008). This contributes to increased competition and peer pressure. In this situation, cooperation patterns, seating and socializing routines are all important markers of alliances, network and status in an otherwise fluid and decentralized team-structure. According to critical management scholars, this double structure of formality-informality actually makes post-bureaucratic organizations more hierarchical and oppressive, but in more challenging, sublime and sophisticated ways than an orthodox bureaucracy (e.g., Courpasson and Clegg, 2006; Clegg, 2011; Kärreman and Alvesson, 2004; Parsons et al., 2012). Employees find themselves responsible for constructing explicit rules and uniting values from relation to relation. Any employee can exploit uncertainties and create rules in his or her own interest, and ‘survival of the fittest’ seems to guide interactions. A stressful professional

and social environment emerges in which employees monitor themselves and their peers as they try to adjust to the opaque, seemingly non-maneuverable social landscape. Moreover, this social landscape is always on the brink of unspecified changes, leading to pervasive uncertainty, which becomes a source of power struggles, as mentioned above.

The rise of elite peers

In Agency, the opacity of informality gives rise to an unofficial hierarchy of privilege that often operates in tacit and subtle ways. That hierarchy is difficult for peripheral employees to define, let alone resist. In other words, opacity promotes feelings of injustice and partiality when employees attempt to make sense of diversity-related events (Belhoste and Monin, 2013; Jonsen et al., 2013; Mamman et al., 2012). Mani, for example, describes a ‘naturalized’ majority rule, which is particularly manifest in situations where minority employees are ‘helped by majority employees:

I can tell a fairytale about diversity in Agency, but there is a dark side – the gate keepers. Any promotion comes at a price. If someone helps you, they can also pull you back. If you receive their help, you end up in an unescapable box of dependency. You give recognition to them and their way of seeing the world. This means control. It is a very subtle gatekeeper function regarding what you can and cannot do. You lose your independence. Nothing is free.

Help offered to minority employees by majority employees – even when well-intended – serves to de-legitimize minority professional competencies and sets the two groups apart. As all of Agency’s managers and chief consultants have a majority background, newly recruited minority employees – mainly in provisional training positions – inevitably end up in an unequal power relation with ethnic ‘overtone’s. They need majority colleagues, especially those with long tenures, to help them navigate the organization; to help with networking and understanding the organizational history; and to distribute high-prestige tasks in their direction so that they can join the promotion pipeline. As translators, the

veterans can help newcomers undertake the interpretative work of defining and negotiating membership roles in the otherwise fluid, opaque hierarchy. According to Eske, the veterans take on the responsibilities for the collective in the absence of formal leadership:

The veterans are seen as embracing a ‘finer culture because they often step into this managerial space – where they should not be – and act as leaders. This gives rise to some wrong power imbalances.

In Agency, the veterans become the carriers of culture. They possess valuable information and networks, and their ‘blessing’ is a prerequisite for the successful on-boarding of newcomers and advancement. Accordingly, not all employees are treated as insiders. Rather, ‘insidership’ is randomly decided according to who recruited a newcomer and whether veterans take the time and responsibility to include that newcomer. Therefore, insider status is not a choice, but rather a matter of luck and trade-offs, all of which serve to naturalize the majority culture and competencies as the norm. Rawijaa describes the ambiguous experience of veterans ‘empowering by disempowering’ (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011):

There are some codes in the higher political system. If you know these codes because you have the right training and network, you will be promoted. This keeps colleagues away from the power monopoly because there is a ‘natural’ but unofficial task-allocation system in place.

The lack of transparency of authority, and the replacement of formalized roles and rules with tacit codes put newcomers at a disadvantage, especially when they have minority backgrounds and little experience with ‘Danish workplace culture’. To this group, the codes and guiding principles of the informal system are not obvious or easily translatable. Instead, the informal system creates a barrier to participation, equal opportunity and career progress. Clear rules of meritocracy and advancement can make promotion systems

and the distribution of privilege more open to employee scrutiny and critique. This, in turn, helps employees ‘learn the ropes’ of the organization and create a sense of opportunity favorable to organizational fairness. However, strong feelings of dependency, admiration and loathing are vested in Agency’s veterans, who are both the gate keepers and the access point to the system. As such, they distribute prestige and status among peers through favoritism and informal alliances.

Continuous hierarchical positioning and peer competition

Whenever formal hierarchy decreases, informal hierarchy increases (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011). In Agency, this results in a constant need for internal positioning and bargaining with and against others, which gives rise to an informal principle of continuous hierarchical positioning. In particular, managerial discretion to offer promotions and to distribute tasks and rewards is a target of employee frustration. In one case, top management promotes an employee to chief consultant (the level directly under the managerial level) without first notifying the employee cooperation committee. Alex describes the candidate as a ‘young, blond and beautiful candidate with a master’s of political science’ who has a relatively short history in Agency. This immediately raises a stir, as some employees feel that longer-tenured employees (i.e., themselves) should be first in line in for promotion accordance with the principles of meritocracy. Moreover, this promotion occurs despite repeated employee demands for greater transparency in relation to the criteria for promotion, rewards and task distribution, which are rejected by top management. Aya explains:

It is unfair that tasks and promotions are distributed without any transparency, with no system in place – no logic. This gives rise to a lot of gossip and guessing. This divides us. You do not know why people get promoted. It just comes out of the blue. It is difficult to state that I did not get the promotion or the high-prestige task because I am not Danish. There is no evidence except for the fact that all of the

chief consultants and managers are white Danes, while the subordinated' have international backgrounds. This promotion sends out a clear signal.

In the post-bureaucratic, collaborative organization, the pecking order becomes visible in the distribution of tasks, promotions and rewards. Consequently, the struggle focuses on the 'visible' proofs of disparity, which result in minority demands for more structure and formality aimed at buffering against gatekeeping practices. As Eva states with regard to the internal stir regarding promotions, 'When things are chaotic, then salaries and status become more important. That is why employees push for criteria regulating promotions, and the distribution of rewards and tasks'.

The reliance on informal power and control by mutual adjustment have important implications for employee experiences of inclusion in the post-bureaucratic organization. Personalized, relational forms of power and control strain collegial relations, as the attention shifts away from the situation itself to relations in conflict situations (Hodson et al., 2013). This might account for the high number of employees indicating that they have been harassed by managers and colleagues in Agency. For instance, everyday jokes and socializing patterns that seem 'innocent' or common-sense to majority employees might be viewed as harassment by minority employees (Van Laer and Janssens, 2011). Rawijaa provides an example – at a meeting, the CEO jokes about his inability to pronounce her name with the excuse: 'Well, I cannot pronounce half of my employees' names'. She states, 'that is like saying "I cannot pronounce these immigrant names"'. It is really provoking and humiliating'. In a similar vein, Aku tells of an experience when planning a training session for entrepreneurs: 'My colleague remarked, "We want real entrepreneurs to participate, not shawarma entrepreneurs with their kiosks. We do not want these people"'. People are not afraid to say these racist things aloud'. In a social milieu regulated by peer competition and positioning, these minority experiences make a strong impression as proof of unfairness based on majority prejudices and exclusion.

Informality gives rise to a diversity paradox in Agency. On the one hand, informality creates room for maneuvering in terms of self-management and discretion, which are job features cherished by the organization's members. This makes space for diverse capacities and competences in task performance and, therefore, stimulates employees' experiences with regard to making a unique contribution to the organization. On the other hand, informality allows for the emergence of elite peers and peer pressure, which Batul suggests keep employees in fixed positions and make it difficult to pursue one's own chosen career path:

There is always a barrier to your progress. You must know your place and position. All of a sudden, I hear from a colleague that someone has taken over the meeting that I have been planning, or that Tor is suddenly in charge of my project... As soon as people from the municipality are involved in a meeting, I can never attend – then others take over. However, they need meeting preparations, which this is where I am relevant. There are certainly limits to the kind of work that is assigned to me.

Accordingly, employee differences become petty rather than productive, and they are enacted as multiple divisive practices between temporary and permanent staff, elite peers and 'subordinates', and ethnic majority and minority employees. Therefore, the organization of diversity in a post-bureaucratic organization carries with it an inherent tension. In line with the principle of informality managerial authority is given to the employees. This, in turn, increases the power struggles between teammates, who wish to act as peer managers. This increases the social-stratification processes among colleagues and hampers the likelihood that all employees can participate on par with each other.

Concluding discussion

This exploration of diversity work in Agency aimed to demonstrate that the structural setup can constrain diversity in a post-bureaucratic organization. This is contradictory to key assumptions made by critical diversity scholars, who argue that the structural setup of

the bureaucratic form produces inequality, while the structural setup of the post-bureaucratic, collaborative form produces equality. Agency serves to demonstrate how the collaborative, democratic post-bureaucratic form paradoxically hampers the very ideal it pursues – the possibility for all employees to participate on equal terms. Team-based, collaborative structures and more porous job boundaries do not, in themselves, reduce the disadvantages minorities face, as proposed by critical diversity scholars (e.g., Acker, 2006; Calás and Smircich, 1999; Crowley, 2014; Dai, 2014; D’Enbeau and Buzzanell, 2013; Kalev, 2009; Mamman et al., 2012; Oswick and Noon, 2014; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2011; Zanoni, 2011). Rather, in Agency, these structural features promote similar attractions that guide collaborative patterns and result in numerous divisions among employees, thereby rendering differences petty as opposed to progressive. In other words, the Agency case illustrates how the structural setup leads to some of the root causes of employees’ experiences with harassment and limits the possibility to participate as peers.

However, this study was not intended to either scorn or praise the post-bureaucratic or bureaucratic forms. In fact, the purpose was not to offer generalizations about any *one* best way to organize workforce diversity, but to highlight that every way of organizing diversity work has its benefits and drawbacks. *Every* organizational structure can both enhance and constrain the organization of diversity, regardless of whether that structure is bureaucratic or post-bureaucratic, mechanic or organic, simple, professional, divisional or adhocratic (Mintzberg, 1993). Nevertheless, the adopted structural measures have significant impacts, as they forcefully shape conventions and possible actions of organizational members, even though those members – as critically reflecting actors – can always act in a way that is not structurally ‘prescribed’. The important aspect for researchers and practitioners is to adequately assess and understand how the structural conditions can be auxiliary or counterproductive to participative parity (Boogaard and

Roggeband, 2009; Crowley, 2014; Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Vallas and Cummins, 2014). This necessitates an approach that moves beyond the stylized typologies and de-contextualized approaches that prevail within current diversity research (e.g., Ahonen et al., 2014; Ariss et al., 2012; Jonsen et al., 2013; Kalev, 2009; Mamman et al., 2012; Oswick and Noon, 2014; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011).

Agency demonstrates that research into workplace diversity is best served by contextualized, situated studies, as diversity practices and problems only become meaningful when interpreted and situated in their organizational setting (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al. 2010). Methodologically, this highlights the relevance of a critical ethnographic approach, which enables researchers to observe and interact with organizational actors and their acts in situ. The purpose of such an approach is not to tell a good story but to move beyond participants' experiences to access deep structures of repression, and to generate critical awareness of alternative, more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity (Duberley and Johnson, 2011; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013).

Implications for practice

As such, this *situated critical* study has implications for practitioners because it adds a reflexive and localized dimension to organizing diversity. In Agency, measures to tackle employee dissatisfaction must take their point of departure in the root causes of that dissatisfaction. The Agency case highlights the need for structural measures to temper the escalating differentiation, peer competition and informal elites that emerge from the adjustable, collaborative post-bureaucratic organizational form. However, I am not naïvely suggesting a power-free organization. As emphasized by Acker (2006), hierarchy and inequality are fundamental aspects of any organization. The problem is not hierarchy *per se*, but the fact that hierarchy can manifest along demographic, non-role-specific and

social fractures. The Agency case illustrates how the post-bureaucratic form produces complex processes of social stratification that disadvantage certain groups of employees, such as newcomers, especially those with minority backgrounds who struggle with the informal, opaque rules of engagement. As such, this form results in a sense of unfairness among employees and a perception of the majority norm as the rule. These developments are disruptive to the social relations that regulate everyday work.

The need to ‘de-differentiate’ by means of requisite but suitable integration measures is paramount in Agency. Agency must focus on how to tackle the escalating processes of differentiation. Unity of effort and coordination must be ensured, as they are vital to the functioning of the organization and its employees. As such, integration measures centering on more formalized roles, rules and procedures – such as formalized criteria for performance, promotion and task allocation – could provide some degree of transparency, which would support the inclusion of more than the lucky few. Given Agency’s current state, disadvantaged employees are left to their own devices when trying to maneuver the organization, hampered by the impression that things are happening of which they are not quite aware.

Nevertheless, meritocratic rules in themselves do not guarantee equality. In fact, they can serve to legitimize unequal opportunity structures under the guise of neutrality. They can, for example, cover up micro-politics of gender and racial practices that lead to re-marginalization and stereotyping (Kalev, 2009; Śliwa and Johansson, 2014; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2011). Inspired by Ashcraft’s (2001) ‘use of dissonance’ and principles of hybrid organization (Battilana and Lee, 2014), formalization in the form of, for instance, a set of unifying rules would need to be continuously and collectively negotiated. This underscores the situational function of standardized rules: to expose otherwise tacit obligations that are enforceable *but* still open to being contested by

employees (Ashcraft, 2001 2006). This blends bureaucratic universalism with post-bureaucratic particularism and, as a result, facilitates mutual accountability and participation.

In this light, measures of requisite integration are not based on a predetermined fixed ‘dose’. Moreover, the exact content and activities of integration measures must be locally defined and adjusted through continuous assessment of how best to counter-balance differentiation. As such, the post-bureaucratic form can both constrain and enable diversity. Adaptive differentiation can be used to unleash self-design, experimentation and local solutions among a highly skilled, diverse group of employees. In addition, the double structure of formality and informality can produce formal rules, roles and procedures that ensure employee experiences of fairness but are balanced by with the collaborative form, which widens the individual’s room to maneuver, thereby enabling every employee to make unique contributions (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014).

In summary, this study does not offer a ‘Procrustean bed’ that instrumentally prescribes the right way of organizing diversity and its management. As the Agency case shows, organizing diversity is an emerging, processual endeavor that must be continuously reinvented; a continuum – rather than a dichotomy – of continuously balancing and adjusting the degrees of integration and differentiation in key domains to temper the tensions associated with constant evolution (Ashcraft, 2001). This awareness can be used to continually – and collectively – explore the most appropriate ways of organizing diversity.

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7. Spatially embedded inequality: Exploring structure, agency, and ethnic minority strategies to navigate organizational opportunity structures

Abstract

Purpose – This paper applies a spatial approach to organizational inequality to explore why unequal opportunity structures persist in an organization despite its commitment to diversity and employing highly skilled ethnic minority employees.

Design/methodology/approach – The (re)production of inequality is explored by linking research on organizational space with HRM diversity management. Data from an ethnographic study undertaken in a Danish municipal center illustrates how a substructure of inequality is spatially upheld alongside a formal diversity policy. Archer's distinction between structure and agency informs the analysis of how minority agency not only reproduces but also challenges organizational opportunity structures.

Findings – The analysis demonstrates how substructures of inequality stabilize in spatial routines enacted in an ethnic zoning of the workplace and ethnification of job categories. However, the same spatial structures allows for a variety of opposition and conciliation strategies among minority employees, even though the latter tend to prevail in a reproduction rather than a transformation of the organizational opportunity structures.

Research limitations/implications – The reliance on a single case study restricts the generalizability of the findings but highlights fruitful areas for future research.

Practical implications – The study sensitizes HRM practitioners to the situated quality of workplace diversity and to develop a broader scope of HRM practices to address the more subtle, spatially embedded forms of inequality.

Originality/value – Theoretical and empirical connections between research on organizational space and HRM diversity management have thus far not been systematically studied. This combination might advance knowledge on the persistence of micro-inequality even in organizations formally committed to diversity.

Keywords

HRM diversity management practice, workplace diversity, organizational space and power, embodiment, ethnic minority strategies.

Paper type

Research paper

Introduction

Ethnic diversity in the Danish labor market is increasing. However, members of minorities are often employed in positions for which they are overqualified. As a result, they are overrepresented in low-skilled and provisionary jobs, underrepresented in management positions, and more likely than members of the majority ethnic group to face unemployment (e.g. Ejrnæs, 2012; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Siim, 2013). These macro trends tend to reflect the micro situation in organizations, even those organizations committed to diversity and equality, as unequal opportunity structures and the inequality that accompanies them often endure (Acker, 2006, 2012; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Risberg and Söderberg, 2008; Tomlinson *et al.*, 2013).

Inequality and the precarious, marginalized position of ethnic-minority employees in organizations dominated by the ethnic majority's norms and values are dominant themes among both critical and more mainstream HRM diversity management scholars. The extant research is dominated by three perspectives. First, organizational inequality is often analyzed in relation to minorities' experiences with discrimination (e.g. Ahonen *et al.*, 2013; Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Klarsfeld *et al.*, 2012; Ostendorp and Steyaert, 2009; Oswick and Noon, 2014; Siebers, 2010; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011, 2014; Verbeek and Groeneveld, 2012). Alternatively, research in this vein centers on generalized societal discourses on immigration with a focus on deconstructing the different elements of those discourses (e.g. Bendick *et al.*, 2010; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Muhr and Salem, 2013; Samaluk, 2014; Siim, 2013; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010). Second, diversity research predominantly investigates the barriers that minority ethnic workers experience rather than the agency that they deploy (for exceptions see, e.g., Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009; Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Tomlison *et al.*, 2013; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). Third, the tenacity of unequal treatment in organizations is mainly addressed in socio-psychological

terms as the effect of (majority) prejudice. This research suggests that it must be rectified through mainstream HRM practices, such as objective procedures, training, and mentoring/network activities (Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Dobbin *et al.*, 2011; Holck *et al.*, forthcoming; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Mamman *et al.*, 2012; Qin *et al.*, 2014; Williams and Mavin, 2014). This diversity research plays a vital role in documenting the persistence of status inequalities along ethnic (and gender) lines in the workplace. However, this insistent focus on cognition in a socio-psychological perspective downplays the more subtle power relations embedded in the dynamics of organizational structure and employee agency, “leaving organizational structures and routines which reproduce inequalities and normalize the privileges of the dominant group (e.g. white and male employers) unchanged” (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014, p. 2).

To address the structural embeddedness of inequality and the role of minority agency, this study advocates a spatial approach to organizational inequality. The aim is to demonstrate how spatial structures both enable and constrain minority employee agency, as spatial routines simultaneously solidify in stabilized substructures of inequality *and* make way for minority employee agency of micro-emancipation. I rely on a spatial-structural approach to make three contributions to current research on HRM and diversity. First, I theoretically and empirically demonstrate how a spatial approach to workplace diversity might offer valuable insights into the more subtle workings of power, privilege, and disadvantage in relation to organizational substructures of inequality (Acker, 2012; Beyes and Steyaert, 2011; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006; Ropo *et al.*, 2013; Taylor and Spicer, 2007; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). Second, I analyze how the organizational space simultaneously constrains and enables minority agency of micro-emancipation (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). This also helps explain how organizational substructures of inequality solidify, as they are not only imposed on minorities – they are also actively reproduced and bolstered through minority employee

agency. Third, I discuss how to develop a broader set of HRM practices to address the more subtle, spatially embedded forms of inequality. This adds to the diversity literature focused on crafting more emancipative ways of organizing workplace diversity (e.g. Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Ghorashi and Ponzone, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Mamman *et al.*, 2012).

Empirically, this spatial approach on organizational inequality draws on ethnographic fieldwork in “Agency” (an alias). Agency is a municipal center renowned for its diversity profile in the Danish context due to its ethnically diverse and specialized workforce, which serves locally operating international businesses. However, it is haunted by poor employee satisfaction, with almost 30 pct. of its employees reporting experiences of harassment and bullying from managers and coworkers associated with issues like language, color of skin, and ethnicity (Employee Satisfaction Report, September 2014). These experiences of harassment relate to the existence of an informal parallel system that encompasses two prevalent routinized spatial practices: ethnic zoning of the workplace and ethnification of job categories. These routinized spatial practices run alongside – and partially undermine – the formal discourse on diversity and equality. Moreover, they constrain the free agency of minority employees. The minority employees spatially respond with five main strategies: a conciliatory strategy of embodying the stereotype that results in the reproduction of structural inequality; or opposition strategies of withdrawal, rebellion, passing, or deviance, all of which challenge the distribution of privilege and disadvantage in the organization.

In its exploration of a spatial approach to organizational inequality, this paper is structured as follows. First, the theoretical framework is introduced, in which research streams on diversity, organizational space, and embodiment are combined. Thereafter, Archer’s analytical distinction between structure and agency is introduced to allow us to grasp the

workings of substructures of inequality. Second, I present the methods used to trace the spatial dimensions of structure and agency, drawing on ethnographic fieldwork in agency. Third, I offer an analysis of the findings, identify the spatial routines that constrain minority agency, and show how they intersect with minority employee strategies of conciliation or opposition. Finally, I discuss ways of sensitizing HRM practitioners to the situated quality of workplace diversity with the goal of addressing the more subtle workings of organizational inequality.

Theoretical background

The HR diversity management practices advanced in the scientific and management literature emphasize the importance of understanding and intervention for reducing or eliminating bias and discrimination in heterogeneous workplaces. This research is characterized by the noble intent for all organizational members to benefit from differences by maximizing inclusion, feelings of fairness, and equality (Bendick *et al.*, 2010; Holck *et al.*, forthcoming; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Shore *et al.*, 2011; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012). The field of diversity management is dominated by a social-psychological approach that stems from research on organizational behavior. This line of research assumes that negative in-group/out-group dynamics are the product of majority individuals' biased cognitive processes and stereotyping, which can be corrected and limited through formalized HRM practices (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Jonsen *et al.*, 2013; Mamman *et al.*, 2012; Qin *et al.*, 2014; Verbeek and Groeneveld, 2012; Williams and Mavin, 2014). Within this tradition, HRM activities include three main types of practices. The first are *objective procedures* and pre-specified criteria for selection, promotion, and lay-off decisions; performance appraisals; and pay structures. Objective and neutral procedures are believed to restrict ethnic majority decision makers' discretion and prevent cognitive biases from shaping allocation and reward decisions (Kalev *et al.*,

2006; Shore *et al.*, 2011). The second practice is *training*, which aims to familiarize employees with anti-discrimination law, ensure behavioral changes, and increase cross-cultural awareness and communication (Dobbin *et al.*, 2011; Qin *et al.*, 2014). The third set of activities are *network and mentoring*, which are designed to counter the social isolation that minorities experience as a result of homogeneity (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Shore *et al.*, 2011).

However, according to critical diversity scholars, these widespread HRM practices of diversity management have generally proved insufficient. In fact, little empirical evidence supports their ability to foster workplace equality (Dobbin *et al.*, 2011; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Oswick and Noon, 2014). One line of critique is that HRM diversity practices are “premature” or based on trial-and-error processes rather than scientific knowledge. Another line of critique suggests that the inadequacy results from the targeting of cognition rather than the structural dimensions of privilege, domination, and disadvantage (Oswick and Noon, 2014; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010). These critics suggest that such practices might even backfire, resulting in stereotyping and re-marginalization (Kalev *et al.*, 2006).

This critique of the inability of HRM practices to mitigate workplace inequality leads to my problematization of how a focus on the individual, cognitive level fails to include consideration of the spatial-structural and relational aspects of workplace inequality. A spatial-structural assessment is often either completely overlooked or conceptualized as introductory or background information (Ahonen *et al.*, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Holvino and Kamp, 2009; Jonsen *et al.*, 2013; Klarsfeld *et al.*, 2012; Mamman *et al.*, 2012; Shore *et al.*, 2011; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007). By introducing a spatial approach to workplace inequality, this study contributes to research broadening the scope of HRM practices and craft more

emancipative ways of organizing workplace diversity. In addition, it adds to the small but growing number of HRM studies analyzing ethnic minority agency in relation to institutional and organizational barriers (Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011, 2014). However, in contrast to other work, this study expands the research scope by exploring how minority employee agency paradoxically both challenges and reproduces organizational substructures of inequality.

The enabling and constraining properties of the organizational space

In this study, a spatial approach is used as an analytical lever to investigate the power dynamics involved in employees' spatial production and reproduction of substructures of inequality, which occur alongside the formal values of equal opportunity. This approach draws on the tradition of focusing on the relation between organizational space and power. In this tradition, the organizational space is viewed as a political area – a power-scape – in which the employees' spatial behaviors are implicated in the reproduction of power relations (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006; Ropo *et al.*, 2013; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). This involves a productive view on organizational space as produced and reproduced in interactions involving both human and non-human elements (e.g. organizational artefacts, such as architectures, furniture, dress codes, techniques, and rules) that “constitute the experience of space through their forms of occupation, activity and movements as much as they are constituted through those spaces that enable and restrict certain events” (Clegg and Kornberger, 2006: 144). As emphasized by Clegg and Kornberger (2006), employees constitute the workspace through countless practices in their everyday work lives as much as they are constituted through them. This productive view on the workspace draws heavily on Giddens' (1984) view on structure and agency as mutually constituting – structures are produced and reproduced through agency, while they simultaneously enable and constrain agency. Thus,

in this study, the constraining and enabling capacities of the workspace are directly linked to minority employees' agency and their degree of freedom to shape their own chosen career paths.

To be able to grasp how minority agency unfolds and navigates the organizational power-scape, I must analytically distinguish between the constraining/structuring capacities and (spatial) structures and their transformative/agentive capacities, as proposed by Archer (1982, 2003). Conversely, it is impossible to talk about the stringency of structural constraints versus degrees of personal freedom. Like Giddens (1984), Archer (1982) conceptualizes structure and agency as mutually constituting. However, Archer *analytically* grasps structure to pre-exist agency as a point of analytical departure, and their interaction leads to either structural reproduction or structural transformation. In line with Archer, I first determine the constraining properties of the organizational space. This relates to the organization as a power-scape consisting of both formalized, explicit structures of equality (e.g. a formalized diversity policy) and more informal, tacit substructures of inequality, as coined by Acker (2012). Acker defines substructures of inequality as the often invisible processes in the ordinary life of organizations in which gendered (and ethnified) assumptions about masculinity/femininity (minority/majority) are embedded and reproduced, and inequality is perpetuated (Acker, 2012, p. 215). By zooming in on the informality of inequality substructures in conjunction with routinized spatial practices, I can uncover the tacit but routinized relational and behavioral aspects of workplace diversity. I refer to two categories of constraining properties of the workplace in the materialization of power and embodiment related to ethnification in job categories. With this spatial approach, I join Alvesson and Willmott (1992), who highlight how spatial practices "produce people" as stabilized constructions of power relations become embodied in and supported by organizational artefacts, such as rules and routines, thereby forcing employees to behave in certain ways.

Archer's (1982) analytical distinction between structure and agency also creates an opportunity to trace minority employees' spatial strategies of navigating the organizational power-scape, which lead to either structural reproduction or transformation. In a structure-agency perspective, minority employees are "knowledgeable agents" who are free to act but simultaneously restricted by their awareness and reflexive interpretation of the structural conditions, opportunities, and constraints they face (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014). Minority employees are viewed not merely as passive receptacles of control but as agents who reflexively act in more or less compliant ways. These actions might create partial organizational spaces for their own micro-emancipation and, potentially, lead to more emancipative ways of organizing diversity (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Janssen and Zanoni, 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin, 2012; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010).

Spatial constraints in the materialization of power and embodiment

The first category of constraining properties of the workspace draws on organizational space as the *materialization of power relations*. This is widely cited as the disciplinary gaze of the panopticon, which induces (self-) surveillance, control, and discipline. This view was formulated by Foucault and propagated by critical poststructuralist scholars of power, politics, and control (Beyes and Steyart, 2011; Clegg and Kornberger, 2006; Ropo *et al.*, 2013). In this perspective, the workplace design embraces a certain effect of inducing routinized employee interaction, which materialize in stable relations of dominance (Taylor and Spicer, 2007; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). This spatial effect is furthered by the disciplinary gaze of peers and managers, who impose particular rules of engagement that, to varying degrees, are internalized or more or less cynically performed by employees (Nicholson and Carroll, 2013; Scott, 2010). Of interest in this regard is that employees pick up cues – often through non-cognitive senses of social cues and feelings

of (dis)comfort and awkwardness – from the atmospheric quality, and from coworkers’ spatial behavior and their responses to others’ spatial behavior (Beyes and Steyart, 2011; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). These cues are then synthesized in spatial responses of what appear to be “natural” behaviors in the workspace, and solidify into spatial routines that guide future action and interaction.

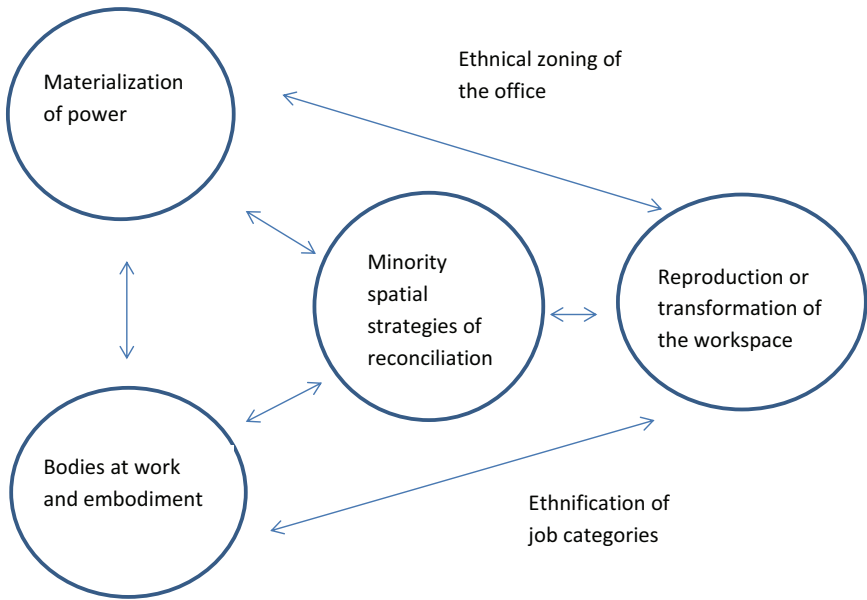
The second category of constraining properties of the workspace is related to *embodiment and bodies at work* – elements that have traditionally been critical for feminist organizational theorists in their attempts to understand inequalities at work (Acker, 2006; Ashcraft, 2013). In addition, a recent issue of *Organization* (2015, Vol. 22 No. 2) demonstrates an increasing interest in theories that include the body and embodiment as part of the “ontological turn” within organizational studies stressing ethics in business (e.g. Dale and Latham, 2015; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015). However, inspired by feminism and Foucault’s historical analysis of the “docile body” (Ropo *et al.*, 2013, Taylor and Spicer, 2007), I approach embodiment as an integral part of a spatial analysis. In the context of this study, the notion of embodiment refers to how “ethnified” bodies are viewed as naturally suited for performing certain jobs, so that those jobs are recognized not by their content and tasks but by *who* does them (e.g. “pink ghettos”, Ashcraft, 2013; Kenny and Fotaki, 2015). Thus, the organizational space offers templates for action and organizational roles through the configuration of human “equipment” (i.e. the employees), with its perceived skills and knowledge, and through job categories (Ropo *et al.*, 2013). The ethnification of job categories is often legitimized as a matter of meritocracy in combination with a need for adequate language skills and professional training. This is especially true among majority employees (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014). Nonetheless, the organizational power-scape becomes embodied and materialized, such that it favors the upward mobility of members of the majority to the detriment of members of the minority.

Minority employees' strategies: The enabling capacity of the workspace

The enabling properties of the organizational space relate to minority employees' strategies of navigating the organizational opportunity structures. Power breeds resistance, and unequal power relations can always be bent, circumvented, strategically appropriated, and countered, thereby creating openings for micro-emancipatory projects (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009; Goffman, 1961; Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Tomlinson *et al.*, 2013). A spatial lens sensitizes the study to the minority employee's more covert acts of silent opposition and deviance, which supplement more overt and explicit resistance. It also allows for bodily acts of behaving differently or embodying other job categories than the (majority) norms prescribe. Therefore, the organizational space becomes a negotiated context in which minority spatial strategies sustain a certain interpretation of reality because minorities internalize the dominant rules and norms, employ methods of self-surveillance, and conform. At the same time, these strategies reinforce the very causes of inequality (Ahonen *et al.*, 2014; Dale and Latham, 2015; Pullen and Rhodes, 2015; Zhang and Spicer, 2014). Alternatively, minorities can engage in strategies that serve to create partial areas of resistance, but often at the cost of alienation and anxiety (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; Goffman, 1961; Nicholson and Carroll, 2013; Scott, 2010; Zanoni and Janssens, 2007).

Figure 1 offers an outline of my spatial approach to the interplay between agency and structure.

Figure 1: Structure and agency in a spatial perspective



Method, research site, and data analysis

To study spatial practices, the researcher must have a close relation to the setting. In practice, an ethnographic approach (Beyes and Steyaert, 2011; Zhang and Spicer, 2014) is required. Ethnography is defined by Van Maanen (2011) as the result of the ethnographer's efforts to describe what he/she experiences in immersive, lengthy participant observations in the field. Furthermore, ethnography makes it possible to use several supplementary and experimental techniques, as the researcher can rely on what he or she sees, hears, and experiences in a specific social setting (see Van Maanen, 2011) while adhering to the situational pragmatism of the applied methods.

This study is based on ethnographic qualitative methods with a “participatory bent”, as the participants (i.e. organizational members) and the researcher as a type of participant affect the research process. Such research is meant to prompt members to reflect on the consequences of their actions (Ashcraft, 1999; Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013). The “collaborative” character of participative research has a dual aim: to generate understanding, and to encourage the assessment and transformation of widely taken-for-granted modes of organizing in the focal organization (Beyes and Steyaert, 2011). The study therefore situated in an interpretative tradition that acknowledges the constructed and relational nature of fieldwork and research (Nicholson and Carroll, 2013).

Research site

“Agency” was a municipal center serving the locally operating international businesses together with the municipal administration to develop the municipal business strategy. It was founded in 2008 with eight employees, but it had grown to 85 employees by the time the fieldwork was initiated in May 2012. Its size had been halved by the end of the fieldwork period (summer 2014). The composition of employees was diverse in terms of age, ethnic background, gender, culture, educational background, previous work experience, and language skills. This was evident on the company's website, on which employees’ cultures, knowledge, and language skills were explicitly described, thereby visually stressing the center’s ambition to provide adequate service to international business. “Diversity” was not specifically mentioned on the organization’s website or in official communication, but the organization referred to the municipality’s diversity and equality policy of demographically mirroring the composition of its citizens. The formal structure entailed three units distinguished by function: advice giving and courses for entrepreneurs, registration and administration of licenses, and strategic/developmental work relating to the municipal business strategy. Agency had three middle managers (one

female all with local background) and a CEO (male), and its offices were organized in a free-seating, open office manner for the formal purpose of encouraging cooperative practices and informal information sharing.

Data collection

In order to trace the empirical data underpinning the spatial dimensions, I applied a combination of qualitative methods of contextualized ethnographic observation and interviews. My aim was to detect, comprehend, and interpret/decode the intersection between the organizational space and diversity processes. My lengthy stay in the organization and my participative fieldwork made this possible. While the fieldwork lasted for a total of 24 months, the bulk of the empirical data were collected over a nine-month period during which the researcher occupied an Agency desk twice each week for an average of six hours. Over the nine-month intensive period, three predominant methods were applied: ethnographic observations, open-ended interviews, and interventions.

Ethnographic observations focused on the ways members routinely engaged with the workspace. This required closer studies of members' spatial practices, such as their appropriation of a desk in the morning, including their territorial demarcation of their space through the use of such elements as bags and writing utensils; their working routines, and the frequency of both professional and social meetings (with whom and how often). Together, these elements summed up to their routinized maneuvering of spatial artifacts and colleagues, which made up Agency's organizational space. Moreover participant observations were undertaken in multiple routine meetings, including center, department, team, and management meetings. In addition, I observed job interviews, two center workshops on "identity formulation" and "an attractive workplace", and ad-hoc social gatherings. Thick-description observations, based on my notes, were recorded each day in fieldwork diaries.

Open-ended interviews were guided by the initial participative observations. I undertook semi-structured interviews with 18 employees and managers, each of which lasted from 30 to 120 minutes. I asked participants to describe their perceptions of the working space in relation to the free-seating situation and the office design, the work culture, and the cooperative environment in terms of, for example, information sharing, task distribution, decision-making processes, and socializing. The interviews included visual elements, as members were asked to draw maps of their spatial routines and seating habits. A summary of the sample's demographics is presented in Table 1.

Interventions were utilized in the final months of intensive fieldwork. The members took an interest in the researcher as a “cognizant outsider”, and some even used the study as grounds for action (Ashcraft, 1999). Interventions provided an opportunity to test the reliability of the data and the researchers’ presumptions through presentations, seminars facilitated by the researcher, participation in debates, informal talks and reflections in response to members’ requests, and one official written report.

Table 1: Coding of interviews with employees in ‘Agency’

FUNCTION	CULTURE, TRAINING AND GENDER	DATES
Internal consultant Initially in a training position but in permanent position after six months	Spanish Human science Woman	Four interviews Nov 2012, June 2013, March 2014 and Sept 2014 Observation Job interview Dec 2012. Employee development interview with section manager March 2013
Section manager	Local background Political science Woman	Six interviews April 2013, 2 x May 2013, June 2013, July 2013, Feb 2014. Mail correspondence and skype interviews (two) Aug 2013 to Jan 2014
Consultant and political/strategic tasks (Union representative)	Local background Political Science Man	Two interviews Nov 2012 and April 2013

Chief consultant	Local background Master in Arts Man	Three interviews Nov 2013 (Skype), April 2014 and Oct 2014
Ethnic consultant In training position	Korea Business Diploma Woman	Observation Job interview Dec 2013 Interview Dec 2013
CEO	Local background Political Science Man	June 2013
Section manager	Local background Political Science Man	June 2013
Chief Consultant /political- strategic tasks	Local background Political Science Man	Nov 2013
Ethnic consultant	North African background Business Diploma Man	Jan 2014
Trainee position	Local background Accountant Woman	Nov 2013
Chief consultant/advisor	Local background Technical training Man	Dec 2013
Ethnic consultant	Former Yugoslavia Business Diploma Man	Dec 2013
Consultant/ political-strategic tasks (union representative)	2. generation Humane science Woman	Nov 2013
Consultant/advisor	Local background Graphic designer Man	Dec 2013
Chief consultant / political- strategic tasks	Local background Social Science Woman	Dec 2013
Ethnic consultant	India Formerly self-employed Woman	Dec 2013
Chief Consultant/political- strategic tasks	Local background Political science Woman	Dec 2013
Project position	2 generation Political Science, Man	Feb 2013

Data analysis

Transcription and initial data analysis began shortly after the study started (Silverman, 2010). To analyze participative observations, interviews, and interventions, I applied a qualitative content analysis inspired by narrative analysis (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998). The content analysis was carried out by splitting the data into relatively small units of content on the basis of themes. Initially, I began by scanning the data and isolating the words and phrases connected to majority/minority distinctions in relation to “spatial zoning”, “embodiment of job categories”, and “minority employee spatial strategies” with a particular focus on strategies of conciliation and opposition. After assigning open codes to different sections of the data, the first descriptive coding revealed common patterns and themes relating to the spatial analytical categories.

In the second round of coding, I paid particular attention to producing adequate themes. In this regard, I assigned content to three spatial analytical categories. First, in relation to the “materialization of power”, the emerging themes were power relations enacted in the spatial routines of zoning of the office space. These emerged from my own observations and employees’ maps of spatial routines, seating habits, and employee reflections on those maps. Second, in relation to “bodies and embodiment”, I traced employee perceptions and behavior that suggested the existence of an informal system of task distribution, advancement, and cooperative patterns, all of which gave rise to a system of majority and minority job categories. The third category – minority spatial strategies – rested on minority employees’ accounts of their own and colleagues’ attempts to navigate the organizational opportunity structures. In particular, one case of experimenting with a different task distribution in cooperation with a middle manager and the subsequent “cost of emancipation” was influential for my findings. In the analysis, I was particularly observant of not only what employees said they did, but also of actual patterns of action and interaction. My aim was to understand how the organization as a power-scape was

kept in place and challenged by the myriad of employee practices, many of which ran parallel to the formal structures of rules and communicated values.

Findings

In this section I present the findings regarding the enabling and constraining abilities of spatial structures, their intersection with the power-related distribution of privilege and disadvantage, and minority employees' strategies of conciliation or opposition in Agency. The first analysis explores how routinized spatial practices created durable substructures of inequality in Agency despite a formal commitment to diversity and equal opportunities. The second analysis investigates how the organizational space granted minority employees certain liberties to embark on strategies of opposition or conciliation.

Spatial constraints in the materialization of power and embodiment

Materialization of power

Agency was situated in a large municipal building. The office space was open, and it was furnished with funky, low-price design furniture in bright colors. The furnishings invoked a creative and modern impression that was not too flashy. With the exception of a central kitchen and a small two-person secluded office for writing, Agency's physical layout was dominated by a transparent style, which signaled openness. It was predominantly made up of a shared working zone in which tables were lined up in rows along two parallel window sections. A maximum of eight people could work at each table. The Aisles were found at one end of the tables. Eight glass-walled meeting rooms were located at the ends of the shared office space, each offering either comfortable chairs or more formal meeting tables. These offices, and together with a seating area in the center of the office, were intended to support frequent meeting activities.

Agency had an official free-seating policy, which was formally articulated by managers. The aims of the policy were to invoke voluntary, informal information sharing and rotating cooperation patterns to activate the employees' diverse skills and knowledge, and to ensure an inclusive climate. However, when asked, employees were able to draw maps of the informal zoning of the office and to place most of their colleagues in fixed seats. In these maps, the administrative staff typically occupied a zone at one end of the office, while the consultants were typically located at the other end of the office. The international group occupied a third zone located between the other two, where members took advantage of the opportunity to take collective breaks and speak together in Spanish. The international group also inhabited the small secluded office within the larger office, which was officially reserved for telephone calls and writing. They referred to this office as "the cage". As one interviewee stated, "We are very much subdivided into groups due to the way we sit. I often sit in the cage with Naya". When asked whether the cage was reserved for those who make trouble, this interviewee stated, "Ha ha. Yes, you might say so." Most respondents emphasized that they were seated in groups according to ethnic background: "We are very mixed *and* very segregated. Just watch how people sit together. Those with similar ethnic backgrounds speak together and socialize. We are even divided according to whether we are first or second generation". Another interview mused, "We are divided between the 'real' Danes and the foreigners. Only a few manage to navigate between the two groups. It is a rather poisonous environment".

The relatively fixed groupings of employees according to ethnic background were evident in the physical zoning of the open office space, in the patterns of who spoke to or smoked cigarettes with whom, in the lunch patterns, and in the languages used around the office. The groups also displayed different behavioral norms. The loudness of collective breaks in the international group provided a direct contrast with the relative silence of the shared workplace. This was often met with resentment: "They just look at us when we talk in

Spanish. Often we hear jokes like: ‘Do you dare tell them that they speak rubbish?’. Employees’ spatial practices clearly signaled patterns of inclusion and exclusion but also indicated who were able to break the unwritten rules of behavior.

Agency’s organizational workspace was a contested space encompassing an ethnified hierarchy despite of its equivocality: the contrast between the signal of openness (i.e. free seating) and the visible spatial enactment (i.e. segregation and ethnic zoning). Accordingly, where an employee placed his or her body represented a political act that demonstrated whether that employee was privileged with a “permanent” seat that no one would (dare to) take or a provisionary employee in a low position who had to fight for a work space every day. The seating choices also reflected the ethnic groups with which employees identified. The power-scape became very visible in these daily seating dramas.

Contrary to the official intention, the free-seating hampered social interaction and served as a type of collective shaming. Employees were very careful with regard to the kinds of signals they sent through their spatial behavior, and they paid close attention to the signals sent by their colleagues. This resulted in less frequent interaction due to fear of interrupting or annoying colleagues, which had a notable negative effect on the inclusion of newcomers with an international background. Newcomers talked about feeling lost and forgotten in the office space, and stated that they never know where to sit. They also highlighted a fear of occupying a “taken” seat and thus breaking unwritten office rules. Navigating the free-seating office space was described as one of the biggest on-boarding challenges. Apart from this frustration, the dysfunctional free seating highlighted an inclusion problem. As such, this problem became a legitimate theme, under which lied the theme of a lack of coherence and cross-ethnic cooperation, which in turn perpetuated a substructure of inequality.

Bodies at work and embodiment

The ethnic zoning of the workplace was closely related to another spatial practice that reinforced a substructure of inequality. One particular spatial artefact – the employee body with its salient demographic features – was used to stabilize power relations. In line with Ashcraft's (2013) metaphor of "the glass slipper", this dimension captured how job categories in Agency "naturally" possessed features that fitted certain groups of employees but not others, resulting in the "ethnification" of job categories.

In Agency, there were no formal rules or procedures for task distribution. Rather, tasks were distributed at the discretion of the managers, allegedly according to who was most qualified to perform the task. In addition, promotions were decided by the CEO on the basis of meritocratic principles outlined in the municipal policy. However, informally, two job categories existed: high prestige political/strategic jobs and low-prestige representative/practical advice-giving jobs. Even though the very idea behind the organization was to help practitioners and political strategists work together to generate innovative political-strategic proposals, there was a sharp functional distinction between members performing the political/strategic work, which predominantly consisted of writing tasks and attending political meetings, and the more representational, customer-oriented functions of consultancy and advice giving. The customer-oriented tasks were officially praised as the center's backbone. However, they were unofficially perceived as low-status tasks intended to showcase the "diversity" of the employees and their language competences. One minority employee reflected on the fact that he was pictured on Agency's main web page but not considered "qualified" to represent the organization at municipal meetings: "We are good enough when we can be used for promotion and to look politically correct. However, when it comes to doing the exciting jobs, we are left out".

Most employees described the political-strategic work as high status and as the access point for advancement in the municipal hierarchy. Political-strategic assignments were often referred to at center meetings as victories in which Agency contributed to the city-wide business strategy. Members working with political/strategic tasks often received task assignments directly from the CEO and were asked to join him at strategically important meetings. The CEO officially praised the representativeness and the international dimension of the employees. However, employees with the “right” professional training (in political science), and native Danish speaking and writing skills were selected for almost all of the high-prestige tasks. Therefore, entrance into high-prestige tasks and professional career tracks was guided by a process aimed at filtering out those employees who were “adequately skilled” to perform certain tasks, as articulated by the CEO:

In order to be able to mirror the municipal corporate landscape, it is important that we have language skills and ballast from other cultures. For example, if we deal with a greengrocer who speaks Arabic, then it is fine to bring Jamal. However, everything that goes up the political system is in Danish, and it is probably just easier for ethnic Danes because they fit, they know how to frame it, and the language is natural in another way. It is a matter of trust throughout the system.

Even though the CEO described the issue as a matter of legitimacy and the practice as one that benefitted all concerned, the end result was that employees with international backgrounds found themselves in the representative, low-prestige job category. At a managerial meeting, the CEO even encouraged the other section managers to be “more tedious ... we must avoid signaling that we have many different backgrounds and we are ‘strange’. Instead we have to signal that we are efficient and knowledgeable”. From his perspective, difference was the same as non-professionalism, while the “tediousness” of white employees trained in political science was equated with professionalism.

Most of the respondents – both employees and managers – spoke of ethnicity as a “skill” in itself. The official recruitment strategy embraced this view, as the talent pool from which Agency drew on was very diverse: “When we recruit employees for advisory tasks, we need ethnic diversity to, for example, service the pizzeria owners”. However, most of the employees with international background entered Agency through an active labor-market scheme, which aimed to move the unemployed into provisional, publicly funded positions. In other words, diversity was coupled with corporate social responsibility and newly appointed “diverse” employees were assigned a lower status, at least initially. Moreover, they had to fight to obtain a permanent position.

Minority employees’ strategies of navigating opportunity structures

This analysis examines how minority agents in Agency both mobilized and reinforced the constraints of the organizational space. Of key concern is how minority employees spatially navigated the power-scape while trying to manipulate events and material resources in order to turn them into opportunities, which in turn may have the potential to transform the organizational opportunity structure. Like bricoleurs, employees creatively applied five main strategies according to the situational logic, and they even vacillated among the strategies.

Conciliatory strategy: embodying the stereotype

The most prevalent minority employee strategy was linked to bodies at work and embodiment, and implied what Goffman terms “colonization” (1961) – accepting and cynically demonstrating compliance. By playing the game and embodying the stereotype of doing representative work, conflicts were temporarily kept at bay. This strategy was closely related to Alvesson and Willmott’s (1992) warning about the costs of emancipation in the form of anxiety and alienation. Hence, embodiment of the stereotype

created a secure position and stability in work life, but it was accompanied by low self-esteem and a relentless need to justify the situation as organizational unfairness. This strategy was evident in the employees' compliance with ethnically zoned seating, collaboration, and socialization patterns. Feelings of social injustice strengthened the bonds among peers with minority backgrounds, while expanding feelings of alienation from majority colleagues.

However, the ethnified job categories could be turned into a strategic position of indispensability. In other words, ethnic-minority employees could exclude others by stressing the valuable language and cultural skills they possessed. Paradoxically, this kept minority employees from challenging the basic cause of inequality – the stereotypical distinction between majority and minority employees in terms of skills and competencies. In fact, they reinforced this stereotypical view in order preserve their own power (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009). This touches upon how the constraint exercised by any structure over one person is directly related to the opportunity it offers to another, which leads to an inherent paradox of inequality and opportunity along ethnically defined lines (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014). The activation of the minority/majority distinction granted access to advantages and disadvantages in Agency. However, taking advantage of reserved, ethnified job categories concomitantly reproduced the very structures that perpetuated marginalization.

Opposition strategies of withdrawal, rebellion, passing, and deviation

The most prevalent opposition strategy was passive resistance in which the employee avoided the managerial and collegial gaze through *withdrawal* (Goffman, 1961; Scott, 2010), linked to the materialization of power. Agency's free-seating setup resembled a panopticon in which surveillance and self-surveillance were parts of its members' interactions. However, Agency also offered numerous hideaways in which members were

free from direct scrutiny. These could be found in online social media, in the smoking area outside, in visits to external clients, and in working at home. Another strategy of withdrawal was to take collective breaks during which languages other than Danish were spoken. This created a space free of majority dominance, while it consolidated the language-based social and collaborative groups. The numerous reports of stress and long-term sick leave pointed to yet another withdrawal strategy.

A second, more active opposition strategy was *rebellion* (Goffman, 1961; Scott, 2010). Rebels emphasized social-demographic categories with political ends. In systems built on the privileges and rights of certain fixed identities, the uncovering of privilege can be converted into political activities, thereby creating internal group solidarity as a point of departure for mobilizing transformational pressure (Holck *et al.*, forthcoming). The rebel in Agency was motivated to fight for justice on behalf of others and often held an employee representative function in the collaborative structure. In that position, the employee would seize every opportunity to unmask unfairness in the distribution of tasks assignments for others, while maintaining his or her privileged situation as an exception to the rule. This created a strong power base for an employee known by peers for speaking the truth and viewed as untouchable by management, as the Janus face of the rebel was the martyr.

The minority strategies of withdrawal and rebellion both took place within a hierarchy in which minority employees were placed in representative roles at the bottom and white majority employees trained in political science were at the top. This power-scape was reified through routinized expectations of behavior and biased interpretations of events – by the winners and losers in the spatial order.

Among the more troublesome opposition strategies actively challenging the status quo of distribution of privilege and disadvantage, was *passing* (Goffman, 1961; Nicholson and

Carroll, 2013). Employees trying to “pass” as members of the majority group were marked by their peers as traitors or deniers of their background: “You know Sarah? She pretends she is not a foreigner. She once asked me if Lebanese people can eat licorice, but she is a Muslim herself!” Hence, the strategy of “passing” was difficult for colleagues to tackle because it obstructed the rebel’s political struggle for social justice, invalidated the claims of unfairness made by the stereotype, and impeded the naturalized matrix of task and status distribution introduced by the privileged employees. Accordingly, few members were allowed to adopt a passing strategy with the status “second generation immigrant” as a necessity.

The most problematic of the minority strategies was *deviance*, which aimed to create partial spaces of micro-emancipation (Scott, 2010). The deviant insisted on moving beyond patterns of inequality, and vowed to stick to his or her own chosen career path. For example, Isaac, an employee with international background persuaded a section manager that he should be assigned political-strategic tasks. This assignment was made unofficially and “at his own risk”. As no formal system of task distribution and job categories was in place, this was just a matter of distributing tasks differently than prescribed by the managerial discretionary routine. Accordingly, the Isaac was left to his own devices while trying to prove that a foreigner who had not studied political science could perform political/strategic tasks. The responses from colleagues were immediate: “The first thing [a section manager] asked me last Friday was ‘Why did you get these assignments on business policy? Why are you allowed to do this with your background?’”. Thereafter, Isaac experienced an increase in professional and social isolation:

It has become very unpleasant to be here, and I get back-stabbed every now and then ... people are constantly questioning whether “we” – the non-Danes – have the right competences, especially writing skills. I constantly have to prove that I am good enough.

Remarkably, Isaac’s exclusion was reinforced by peers with minority backgrounds. Especially among the rebels and the stereotypes, Isaac was viewed as impersonating the “stranger among us” and as a threat to the spatial organizational ordering of “us versus them”. Isaac embodied an equivocal Other who both unmasked the artificial character of the minority/majority distinction on which claims of social injustice were based, and demonstrated its pervasiveness by demonstrating very tangible barriers to equal opportunity. Isaac ended up being excluded and unofficially exiled from Agency: “Troublemakers like me get ‘engaged’, or lent out to other organizations, so that we are kept out of sight”. The materialization of power relations subsequently solidified, demonstrating the mutual constitution of estrangement and solidarity (Scott, 2010).

Table 2 provides an overview of the findings in relation to the spatial themes of materialization of power and embodiment, and minority employees’ strategies.

Table 2: Overview of spatial themes and practices in Agency

Enabling and constraining capacity of space	Themes	Spatial practices
Materialization of power	Ethnical segregation of the office space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethnical zoning and fixed seating in a ‘free seating’ office - Segregated patterns of socializing and cooperation - The office space as a power-scape reinforced by symbolic employee spatial practices related to seating and socializing routines
Bodies at work and embodiment	‘Ethnification’ of job categories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High-prestigious job categories are reserved for ethnic majority employees legitimized by meritocracy - Low-prestige job categories are reserved for ethnic minorities hampering their own choice of career paths
Minority employee spatial strategies	Strategies of conciliation and opposition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Embodying the stereotype - withdrawal from the gaze - passing - rebellion - counter-space of deviance

Concluding discussion, implications for HRM practices, and limitations

This study adds to the emerging field of critical diversity research by moving diversity debates away from their foundation in cognition and social psychology (Ariss *et al.*, 2012; Qin *et al.*, 2014; Williams and Mavin, 2014; Zanoni *et al.*, 2010). This article has explored the enabling and constraining capacities of Agency's organizational space in relation to minority employees' abilities to shape their own chosen career paths. The study demonstrates how spatial practices can detract from, distort, or even hijack formal policies on equal opportunity by spatially re-inscribing a majority/minority distinction. In Agency, the zoning of the office space along ethnic lines and the ethnification of the job hierarchy resulted in the assignment of certain job categories to either minority or majority groups.

This spatial approach to organizational substructures of inequality informs current research on HRM diversity management in two ways. First, I argue that formal HRM practices – such as objective procedures, sensitivity training, and networking – often fail because they are not embedded in a situational assessment of the tacit, organizational “underbelly” of power battles related to privileges, disadvantages, and resistance. For instance, Agency relied on objective criteria in recruitment and selection – a common HRM practice. As a result, minority applicants were recruited, but only for limited number of job categories, and predominantly on a provisional basis with little potential for advancement. Hence, the diversity potential was undermined by spatial practices that produced ethnic stratification in relation to cooperation, socializing, and task-distribution routines. In addition, to be able to benefit from training and network activities, a general recognition of the existence of substructures of inequality is necessary. In Agency majority employees had the privilege not to see their privilege (Acker, 2006) persuaded by objective and neutral criteria of municipal meritocracy backed by formal diversity policies of equal opportunities. In this situation sensitivity training and networking/mentoring might even have led to re-marginalization and stereotyping,

triggering negative (majority) responses in which promoted minority members were perceived as non-deserving (Kalev *et al.*, 2006).

Second, a focus on the barriers experienced by minorities, rather than the reflexive agency they deploy, cuts HRM diversity management practitioners off from an important vehicle of transformation. To facilitate change, HRM practices must provide disadvantaged minority employees with material and symbolic resources in order to empower them to fight against their marginalization (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2009). In this regard, objective criteria, networking and mentoring are insufficient. Empowerment must include a broader set of structure-targeting HRM practices involving minority employee participation and empowerment, and a break with ethnic zoning and the ethnification of job categories. In Agency these could have included compulsory rotations in teamwork, conflict-resolution processes, access to crucial information and resources, involvement in high-prestige mainstream tasks, and providing some influence on decision-making processes (Janssens and Zanoni, 2014; Qin *et al.*, 2014; Van Laer and Janssens, 2011, 2014).

The adoption of a spatial approach to workplace inequality also has significant implications for practice, as the empowerment of minority employees requires careful consideration of the advantages and costs of strategies related to either conciliation or opposition. Consequently, a complex and paradoxical configuration of the motivations behind minority employees' strategies in Agency emerges. On the one hand, they worked within an organizational structure that reflected and sustained majority-enforced norms. On the other hand, they benefitted from their favorable positioning, which arose from their specific skills for dealing with international customers and representing the company. This paradoxical position may explain why conciliatory strategies tended to prevail despite the broader variety of opposition strategies and the high level of minority

dissatisfaction. Notably, employees from both the ethnic majority and the ethnic minorities gained from this paradoxical minority position of privilege/disadvantage, which in turn perpetuated a substructure of inequality.

This serves to highlight the rarity of structural transformation – once minority employees have learned to play the game, the losses associated with deviations are high and the desire for reform declines (Ortlieb and Sieben, 2014; Tomlinson *et al.*, 2013). The stakes must be shifted increasing the advantages of opposition, especially in relation to the strategy of deviation, which posed the greatest challenge to the skewed opportunity structures in Agency. The costs of micro-emancipation were too high in terms of alienation and anxiety for minority employees (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992). An alternative organizational space must to be crafted in which all employees' contributions are valued equally. This necessitates a broader definition of the competencies that constitute a qualified employee regardless of ethnic affiliation (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014; Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Janssens and Zanoni, 2014).

This study suffers from several limitations but highlights potential areas for future research. First, there are limitations associated with focusing on a single case, as the findings cannot be generalized to the total population but can only demonstrate the power of the example (Silverman, 2001). Second, focus is on a particular type of (flat and post-bureaucratic) organization in a specific cultural context (Danish). However, as there are other modes of organizing in other cultural contexts, more work is needed to explore the various types of spatially embedded substructures of inequality and the related configuration of minority employees' strategies.

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9. CONTRIBUTION AND CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

As deliberated in the introduction this study takes its point of departure in a critical ethnographic study in two organizations: Fastfood and Agency. The topic of this dissertation springs from fieldwork observations in the two organizations: that their very different organizational setup, their ways of organizing core tasks and work flows, their means of coordination and control, and their ways of dealing with their 'environment' and organizational situation, their spatial design and employees' enactment of the organizational space – all of these mundane aspects of organizing everyday work have a significant impact on their ability to effectively organize diversity in favor of emancipative practices. Consequently I have explored organizing diversity in the two organizational settings, asking the following main research question: *How do the greater historical-societal setting, the organizational setup and spatial structures both enable and constrain organizing diversity in the two case organizations, and what are the implications for the management of diversity and employee agency?*

In this last chapter, I first summarize the main findings of the study based on the four articles that make up the contribution of this dissertation. Each section will answer a part of the main research question which will be referred to in the headings i.e. the greater historical-societal setting, the organizational structural setup, and the spatial structures. My articles are presented as single-case studies to deepen and unfold the enabling and constraining aspects of structure in relation to organizing diversity at organizational level. However, in the concluding discussion I draw in comparative aspects from my two case organizations in order to nuance and elaborate on my findings. The comparative aspects are considered when I discuss implications for management of diversity and employee agency, and in the succeeding section when I consider the enabling and constraining

aspects of intervention-based critical ethnography when studying diversity *in situ*. Finally I end up discussing perspectives for future research.

The contribution: To study embedded diversity

How does a polarized research field enable and constrain organizing diversity?

The first article constitutes a theoretical contribution by exploring the connections between identity and diversity literature which have so far not been reviewed systematically. In addition, it serves to situate my approach to organizing diversity by drawing up the theoretical landscape of contemporary diversity research (literature review). The article describes the frontiers of a polarized diversity field between proponents of mainstream diversity management and then critical and post-structural perspectives – the latter taking their outset in a critique of the first mentioned. The article deliberates how this polarization constrains the ability to create new knowledge.

As such the polarization of the diversity field is constraining the organizing of diversity at organizational level as practitioners are either left with generalized often irrelevant or even counterproductive implications for practice (mainstream diversity management) or only warnings and farfetched emancipatory utopias with no practicable guidelines of how to get there (critical diversity research). However, in the article we argue that this situation can be turned to the progress of diversity research if the three perspectives are combined in a multi-perspective approach. This multi-perspective approach is my point of departure for coining the notion of organizing diversity. Organizing diversity is my alternative or ‘third space’ (Soja, 1996) to explore the possibilities of research that goes beyond an *either-or* of critical and mainstream diversity research to a *both-and* position.

I argue that the third space of organizing diversity makes a prone template for carrying out critical performativity when research *must* involve an element of new knowledge *and* be

practically oriented. This I do by combining critical and mainstream diversity research: A critical perspective by emphasizing the entwinement of power and inclusion/exclusion processes otherwise ignored within mainstream diversity drawing on an apolitical, power-void notion of diversity. This underlines the enabling potential of a critical perspective *and* the constraining aspects of diversity management scholars' portrayal of inclusion as a harmonious 'win-win' situation. A mainstream perspective is applied when insisting on practicability and that research must address the concerns raised by practitioners. The element of practicability indicates the constraints of critical research prompting visions of emancipatory organizations but not how to convert these into viable alternatives (Hartmann, 2014). As such, article one's deliberation of a polarized diversity research field and the possibilities of a multi-perspective approach are formative to my theoretical and methodological approach to analyzing the organizing of diversity in my three empirically grounded articles.

How does the historical-societal setting enable and constrain organizing diversity?

The key concern of the second article is to highlight the interplay between diversity in its organizational setting and then the greater historical-societal structures. With this approach we do not 'go macro' as customary within critical and mainstream diversity research (e.g. Ahonen et al., 2014; Dobbin et al., 2011; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Kalev, 2009; Klarsfelt et al. 2012; Kossek et al., 2006; Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Tatli, 2011; Zanoni et al, 2010). We analyze how the greater historical-societal structures unfold at organizational level to demonstrate the entwinement of micro and macro imbued in an embedded approach. As such we do not generalize about the effect of the greater historical-societal setting but inquire how it unfolds in a particular organizational setting at a particular point of time.

Center of attention in this article is to analyze how the historical-societal setting both enables and constrains organizing diversity at company level. This unfolds in an analysis of how the Danish variant of diversity management coupled with corporate social responsibility is a double-edged sword. On the one hand companies are persuaded to recruit otherwise ‘marginalized’ minority employees (enabling). On the other, diversity is then less about capitalizing on and valuing human differences (albeit still keeping labor costs low by placing minority employees in provisional low-paid or non-paid training positions), but about a moral imperative to act as good corporate citizens (constraining). The linking of diversity with corporate social responsibility reinforces minority employees as lacking adequate training and language abilities in a self-referential, tautological circle. As such the differences that minorities bring into the organization are either problematized or stereotyped which pinpoints our findings in Fastfood.

The analysis of Fastfood illustrates how understanding of local practices of organizing diversity and its’ management come though situating these in a historical-societal setting. In addition, the Danish setting demonstrates how sidestepping the business potential by only pursuing a social justice agenda need not lead to emancipatory organizations – contradictory to the predictions of most critical diversity proponents. As such taking into consideration the historical-societal setting *is* then a prerequisite for assessing what kind of agenda – be it business case or social justice, individualized or group-based diversity activities etc. – that can actually lead to more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity.

How does the organizational setup enable and constrain organizing diversity?

The third article challenges the prominence of diversity research based on abstract theoretical assumptions (critical diversity research) or large-scale secondary data (positivist mainstream diversity management research) claiming that they both fail to grasp the complexities of organizing diversity embedded in its local organizational setting. This

is despite persistent documentation of lack of applicability and progress within contemporary diversity research (e.g. Dobbin et al., 2011; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Jonsen et al., 2011, 2013; Klarsfelt et al. 2012; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Stahl et al., 2010; Tatli & Özbilgin, 2012; Zanoni et al, 2010). My argument in article three is that the paucity of empirically grounded research rigidifies the field by inferring stylized typologies and confirming theoretical assumptions. Drawing on ethnographic data from Agency, the article penetrates a prevalent dogma within critical diversity research of scorning the bureaucratic form as incarnating inequality while post-bureaucratic, collaborative organizations are seen as more prone templates to foster equality (e.g. Noon, 2010; Prasad, 2006; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Contradictory the study of Agency illustrates how key characteristics of the post-bureaucratic form constrain organizing diversity.

My main intention in article three is to disrupt any unproductive, theoretically assumed causal link between a certain organizational structure and form, and then the organizations ability to foster equality. The argument is that every organizational structure and form potentially both enables and constrains organizing diversity, which is an often neglected fundamental dynamic that practitioners must take into consideration. The ambition with this article is thus to underline the necessity of a structural agenda; to expand the scope of contemporary diversity research to move beyond stylized typologies and theoretical assumptions by grounding research more firmly in empirical studies exploring the actual local interplay between structural setup, diversity practices and then possible emancipatory aspirations. As such I argue that the notion organizing diversity is first step on the road to create a greater awareness of organizational dynamics that enable and constrain more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity in the local organizational setting.

How do the spatial structures enable and constrain organizing diversity?

The fourth article takes up a spatial dimension of organizational structure that is rarely granted much attention within diversity research. Theoretically and empirically I analyze how an explicit focus on spatial structures offers valuable insights into the more subtle workings of power, privilege, and disadvantage in relation to organizational substructures of inequality (Acker, 2006, 2009, 2012; Beyes & Steyaert, 2011; Clegg & Kornberger, 2006; Ropo et al., 2013; Taylor & Spicer, 2007; Zhang & Spicer, 2014). A spatial approach demonstrates how there is often a large discrepancy between what you strategically *say* you do (valuing diversity and equality) and what is actually *being* done (spatial practices of exclusion in ethnic zoning and embodiment of jobs) which necessitates a step beyond a purely discursive and cognitive approach dominating diversity research (e.g. Jonsen et al., 2011; Oswick & Noon, 2014). In other words, a spatial approach can uncover the discrepancy between espoused moral theory of the organization in statements of moral principles, and then the actual behavior operant within the organization reflecting its ‘theory-in-use’ (Argyris & Schon, 1996). This is not to showcase the hypocrisy that oftentimes haunts the notion of diversity management, but to underline how the organizational spatial structures potentially both enable and constrain organizing diversity in every organizational setting. This touches upon the interplay between intentional practices and then their more or less unintentional consequences oftentimes neglected by (diversity) management scholars and practitioners: For instance Agency’s free seating, open office space is formally designed to invoke rotating collaboration, information sharing and frequent socializing among all employees. Nonetheless, employees practice the office space in an ethnic zoning enacting substructures of inequality.

The analysis presented in article four demonstrates how spatial practices of ‘theory-in-use’ can detract from, distort, or even hijack formal policies on equal opportunity by spatially re-inscribing a majority/minority distinction (Van den Brink et al., 2010; Van den Brink &

Benschop, 2012). But the very same spatial structures can enable employee micro-emancipative agency to challenge and potentially alter the power-scape by enacting it differently than otherwise practiced by colleagues (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). This entanglement of structure and agency helps to grasp how organizational substructures of inequality simultaneously stabilize and change by means of employee spatial practices – as they are not merely imposed on but also actively reproduced and bolstered through employee agency. These findings have gross implication for the management of diversity as well as employee agency in my two case organizations: Article four demonstrates the limits of prescriptive and normative procedures and rules prompted by diversity management scholars and applied by practitioner to try and manage diversity. As such article four underlines the necessity of studying diversity in action to be able to propose practically oriented solutions that potentially involves progressive impact on organizing more emancipative workplaces/spaces.

What are the implications for the management of diversity?

A contribution unifying my four articles is to move from managing diversity to organizing diversity. As elaborated in the introduction, the notion of organizing diversity has been applied to set my approach to diversity apart from *intentional* and *deliberate* attempts to manage diversity characterizing mainstream diversity management practices. These attempts to manage diversity will always and only be attempts. My research underlines how organizing diversity is a processual endeavor filled with contradictory demands, ambiguous acts endowed with power and emotions (Ashcraft, 2001, 2006; Czarniawska, 2005, 2006, 2008; Gioia, 2003; Weick, 1979, 2001). There is no causal linear link – but a transformative one – between input/gestures to manage diversity and then outcome/employee responses forming the chain of members' gesture-response that makes up the organizing of diversity (Stacey & Griffin, 2005). As a consequence diversity

relations are *also* produced and reproduced as an *unintended* consequence of organizing the daily flow of tasks distribution and performance (by means of lines of authority, collaborative patterns, personnel decisions etc.). This has implications for practitioners – be it managers, employees/colleagues or HR personnel – as they have to move beyond thinking about diversity in strictly deliberate prescriptive and universal principles for managing diversity perpetuated by mainstream diversity research.

Organizing diversity is my both-and *not* either-or point of departure inspired by Ashcraft's notion of dissonant organizing shaking the faith in unity of direction assumed by diversity management proponent. Organizing diversity involves practitioner considerations of how to strategically meet and align objectives and demands from conflicting agendas in the attempt to coordinate a shared collection of tasks performed by a diverse group of employees. Adopting a structural approach can help to highlight some of the conditions that forcefully shape conventions and possible actions of organizational members, even though they can always – as critically reflecting actors – act in a way that is not structurally 'prescribed'. As such attempts to manage diversity – by organizing it – must be grounded in a firm assessment of how the structural conditions can be auxiliary or counterproductive to condition participative parity (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Crowley, 2014; Tomaskovic-Devey, 2014; Tomlinson et al., 2013; Vallas & Cummins, 2014). Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967, 1986) conceptual pair of differentiation and integration is helpful to grasp the working of structuring attempts to balance and align otherwise contradictory processes in favor of stabilizing a certain set of repetitive actions. Repetitious acts help to lower membership sensations of ambiguity and flux in the face of escalating differentiation installed by a diverse workforce. But it is an emerging, processual endeavor that must be continuously reinvented. This awareness can be used by practitioners to continually – and collectively – explore the most appropriate situational way of organizing diversity to meet the demand of the situation.

That being said, Fastfood does in fact demonstrate how intentional activities of diversity management *can* be applied with predictable results. Fastfood shows how a highly integrative, transparent and predictable form based on clarity of rules and norms make the social and professional organizational landscape easier to navigate for all members. In Fastfood inclusion occurs through bureaucratic formalization aimed at securing impartiality: e.g. in transparent hiring procedures, manuals on on-boarding, promotion, and evaluation procedures that make managers and colleagues aware of practices that can be seen as excluding. Every employee is trained and managed the same way and there is no difference in availability or arbitrariness of information separating employees. But Fastfood's formalized setting also enforces a homogenizing culture of organizational commitment on members to uniformly enact corporate values. Fastfood bestows membership identity by design, as members are schooled through corporate manuals; continuous training programs; and close supervision by higher-ranking members who monitor and correct those who have replaced them at lower levels, helping them to become 'colonized and cloned' members of the 'Fastfood family' (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Nicholson & Carroll, 2013; Scott, 2010). Fastfood is caught in a desire for control aimed at inducing an *esprit de corps* that is supportive of inclusive behavior. This is enforced through compliance with 'diverse uniformity,' as differences are linked to superficial and stereotypical images (see Article two) rather than to members' work-related uniqueness. As such the structural setting both enables and constrains organizing diversity.

The opposite scenario of Agency demonstrates how lack of formal diversity procedures and practices combined with an informal and collaborative post-bureaucratic setup – guided by mutual adjustment and tacit socially enforced principles – promote peer competition and peer elites socially and ethnically stratifying the workplace to the detriment of feelings of organizational fairness. But again, these very same structural features induce room for maneuvering in terms of self-management and discretion, which

are job features cherished by the organization's members that potentially enable organizing diversity by unleashing the unique competencies and potentialities of all the employees.

Agency and Fastfood then demonstrate how organizing diversity is a balancing act: On the one hand, integrative measures have to be applied to create transparency by means of unitary meritocratic rules and procedures combined with clear lines of authority helping a diverse group of employees to navigate and hence participate on some common, shared foundation. On the other hand, differentiation is fruitful to unleashing employee discretion by means of broader norms for performance and utilization of multiple competences (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014). Both of the organizations have a potential for organizing diversity in favor of more emancipatory practices. I argue that this aspiration is hampered in both organizations due to their inadequate attention to the balancing of differentiation and integration. Implications for practitioners are accordingly to embark on a more open minded multi-perspective approach and to be guided by empirical observations and puzzlements as a starting point. Emancipative organizations can go hand in hand with exploring more functionalist organizational aspects like structure and form if combined with a critical, subversive interpretation.

What are the implications for employee agency?

In article four I deal with minority employee strategies of conciliation and opposition, and claim that this is neglected but potentially poignant avenue for organizational transformation (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992; Courpasson et al., 2012; Courpasson & Clegg, 2012; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). As such most diversity research focus on the barriers experienced by minorities, rather than the reflexive agency they deploy. My argument is not only does this present a highly eschewed reflection of minority employees' agency in the organizational setting – it also cuts off practitioners form an important vehicle of transformation.

My study of employee agency in Agency underlines how disadvantaged minority employees must be supplied with material and symbolic resources of empowerment to fight against their marginalization; supportive structures must be in place to facilitate change. In this regard, traditional diversity management procedures of objective criteria, and activities of networking and mentoring prove insufficient. In Agency, empowerment arises through a broader set of structure-targeting HRM practices involving minority employee participation by means of compulsory rotating teamwork, conflict-resolution processes, access to crucial information and resources, involvement in high-prestige mainstream tasks and positions, and engagement in decision-making processes (Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Qin et al., 2014; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011, 2014).

But successful acts of micro-emancipation in favor of more equal opportunity structures not only rely on minority but also majority employees: This is why I talk about employee agency in general. In Agency, successful acts of resistance rely upon the consent and support of elite peers joining strategic alliances with opponents in ‘cooperative resistance’. In the polyarchic post-bureaucracy ‘cooperative resistance’ is a way to consolidate or even more up social strata of the organization (Courpasson et al., 2012). Hence embarking on ‘cooperative resistance’ – like Aya with the aid of her section manager – is interpreted as an act of career or status enhancement by the other organizational members (Courpasson & Clegg, 2012: 73). What is at stake is the privileged access to managerial sanctified involvement in core organizational matters of task distribution and coordination of task performance (Vikkelsø, 2015) – not only one (minority) members access to professional and personal development through performing new tasks. As such Agency demonstrates how crafting a more emancipatory organization involves the whole organization and the acceptance of loss of (majority) privilege to the benefit of the community.

Methodological contribution: Critical-affirmative interventions

This study rests on a firm belief that identifying more emancipatory ways of organizing diversity involves *both* a critical reading *and* a practical orientation. Citing Janssens and Zanoni (2014: 318), I ‘refuse to leave diversity management to non-critical, functionalist research paradigms which aim to enhance performance instead of challenging inequalities. At the same time, [I] acknowledge the difficulties of the task at hand and do not evade critically self-reflecting on the (im)possibilities of equality-fostering diversity management in capitalist organizations.’ This both-and insistence I approach as a bridging endeavor to align the polarized diversity field *and* to bridge research and practice.

Cross-disciplinary research as a panacea to align a polarized field

Theoretically I bridge critical and mainstream diversity literature, the structure-agency divide troubling most sociological research, and contingency theory with more critical organizational theory on power and control. Inspired by Alvesson et al. (2008) I insist on R-reflexivity not D-reflexivity. D-reflexivity grasp the polarization between critical research that Deconstructs and Destabilizes texts and knowledge claims, and then De-contextualized and Displaced (non-situated) positivist diversity management. Both strands of research could benefit from an alignment – otherwise diversity research ends up as a theoretical exercise of ‘evidencing’ stylized typologies or abstract theoretical links instead of engaging with practitioner to move the field in a progressive direction. There is an urgent need to move beyond typologies and create a hybrid form of organizing diversity by means of R-reflexivity to Reconstruct and Re-present alternative variants and expressions of theory (Hibbert et al., 2014). I am not preaching a great consensus exercise but to use the dissonance between the polarized research strands to progressively challenges each other: to allow diversity research to expand and change beyond the original context of its formulation as relationally reflexive researchers (Gilmore & Kenny, 2014).

Politics and impact of intervention-based research

Apart from challenging the theoretical dogmas of diversity research, I want to challenge yet another dogma of a ‘gap’ separating research and practice. The ‘rigor-relevance gap’ has debated for decades pondering on how research is often considered irrelevant by practitioners and incapable of improving practice (Alvesson et al., 2008, 2011; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011, 2013; Burnes & Cooke, 2012; Cunliffe, 2011; Davis, 2010; Hibbert et al., 2014; Mahadevan, 2011; Michailova et al., 2014; Wright, 2011). Proponents of critical diversity portray diversity management as a ‘premature’ managerial concept that is based on ‘trial-and-error’ processes rather than grounded in scientific considerations and knowledge (Dobbin, 2009; Kalev & Dobbin, 2006; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Noon, 2007). Likewise internally amongst critical scholars there is an ongoing debate on the problematic disdain for management as a practice and how scholarship must directly engage with practice to fulfill its emancipatory aspirations (Alvesson et al., 2008; Bartunek, 2007; Cunliffe, 2003; Hartman, 2014; Holck et al., forthcoming; King & Learmonth, 2015; Spicer et al., 2009). Consequently, a different form of research has been called for – one that engages both academics and practitioners in order to produce knowledge involving yet another quest for R-reflexivity.

I argue that employing intervention-based research can enable this ‘critical friendship’ (Gilmore & Kenny, 2015), ‘progressive pragmatism’ (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), ‘critical performativity’ (Spicer et al., 2009), ‘subversive reading’ (Hartman, 2014) or tempered radicalism (Meyerson, 2001) of moving ‘out of the armchair’ theorizing to actively engage with practitioner to collectively formulate a more critical-progressive agenda in organizations (Meyerson & Kolb, 2000). All of these approaches involve an inherent tension between being ‘relevant’ to practitioners practicing diversity management in organizations and then to encourage skepticism about the idea that diversity can be managed. Intervention-based critical ethnography forces the ethnographer/critical

researcher out of the comfort ‘armchair’ zone of observations to involve with practical problems of organizing diversity as a boundary spanning, bridging consultant-researcher (Bartunek, 2007; Cunliffe & Karunanayake, 2013; Deetz, 2008; Czaniawska, 2001).

Nevertheless, intervention-based research both enables and constrains exploring diversity *in situ*: In the methodological chapter I reflect on how ambivalence is core in tempered radicalism. A critically self-reflexive researcher needs to ask herself: who’s agenda do I legitimize? There is always the fallacy to end up a tame, toothless (‘useful idiot’) or temporary lost radical which was is part of my experience.

In Fastfood I interviewed a restaurant manager with social worker background. In a standardized machine-bureaucratic organization, she was a rule-breaker. As a former social worker she believed strongly in personal development to secure tenure and motivation among her staff, and she crafted work procedures that left room for local adjustments and employees’ initiatives. She actively promoted collective disobedience in her restaurant. My description of her model was used to copy and disseminate throughout the organization followed by new training manuals, educational activities for managers, etc. Consequently one restaurant’s collective disobedience was absorbed and transformed into new bureaucratic rules and procedures. As a tempered radical this alternative use of research to legitimize a managerial agenda is a valid consideration.

In Agency, another re-configuration of the tempered radical emerged in temporary lost radical. As a non-paid researching consultant I constantly had to negotiate and fit in my proposed interventions to the everyday agenda and priority of the practical problems at hand. What is more, I was referred to as the organizational ‘psychologists’ as an internal joke among the employees. As such my agency was ambivalent and I often times felt lost; watching Aya struggle and her section manager leave, I felt relative powerless. Likewise after an intensive period of seminars culminating in the formulation of the plan for rotating

teamwork, I experienced how my intervention was ‘suffocated’ by waves of restructurations and employee resentment to embark on yet another change. As such the impact of my ‘progressive’ interventionist approach was neglectable.

The tempered radicalism of consulting-research combines process and structure/agency in my way of activating intervention-based ethnography. I both embodied agency and provided structure; the latter mentioned relates to being integrated in management decision-making by consulting and advice giving in both of my case organizations. In these particular situations I assumed the role of setting the frames and standards of how to organize diversity. I became a structuring agent. Structure and agency merged in this process – as such a structural approach both enabled and constrained my researching agency.

Summing up, to study embedded diversity in this dissertation involved an intervention-based critical ethnographic approach exploring the structural tensions of organizing diversity. In the articles and in this conclusion I have split up this endeavor in separate sections: But the main insight from doing this research is that studying and practicing embedded diversity involves bringing all the structural aspect into consideration *simultaneously* to draw up a fine grained and highly complex organizational landscape in which diversity processes and practices are nested. Organizing diversity is my both-and *not* either-or point of departure in response to a polarized research field. Organizing diversity *is* my main contribution as it highlights the necessity to study diversity *in situ* in order to produce new knowledge as well as to be practically oriented. *To me the notion of organizing diversity is both the means and the end in the quest for more emancipatory organizations.*

Perspectives for future research

This study has its limitations. However, instead of pondering what I should have done differently, I will make some suggestions for future research based on the six commandments that summarize my contribution to contemporary diversity research extracted from this dissertation. To effectively inquire into and elaborate ways to organize diversity in favor of emancipatory organizations, diversity researchers have to embark on:

- *Cross-disciplinary research as panacea to reconcile a polarized diversity research field*
- *A situated approach sensitive to the impact of the greater societal-historical setting*
- *Open-minded empirical research firmly grounded in the organizational setting*
- *Organizing diversity as an interplay between intentional and unintentional means and ends*
- *Focus on employee agency as agents for ‘collaborative resistance’ from bottom-up*
- *Critically-affirmative interventions to reform in favor of more emancipatory organizations*

This being said, at the risk of too many repetitions, I will further elaborate three particular areas of future research where I spot the greatest potential.

First, more in-depth and preferentially comparative case studies could advance a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of diversity in organizations. Especially further investigations across occupational sectors/different structural setup and forms would specify the generalizability of the theoretical contribution made in this dissertation.

Second, I would very much like to see future research engage more explicitly in the ethical aspects of doing intervention-based critical ethnography. Ethical aspects especially linked to problems of difficult and unpredictable situations that arise from interventions, would help to further knowledge about what actually happens in processes of organizing

diversity. Participative engagement effects and ‘affects’ the participants when dealing with sensitive aspects of diversity, ethnicity and identity intimately linked with power connotation of minority/majority relations. What is more, critical-affirmative research on organizing diversity gives a certain political flavor involving power games in the organization ‘coloring’ the same research findings. The organizational impact of participative engagement needs to be critically assessed together with the ethical organizational implications of intervening in diversity processes.

On a final note, tracing emancipative organizational practices beyond reified prototypes, inferred theoretical causalities, political standpoints and ideological dogmas of a polarized field will be fruitful. A more open-minded, multi-perspective approach will help to identify alternatives. My use of feminist and general organizational theory, hybrid organizations and contingency thinking is but one multi-perspective approach. Exploring different structural forms like my case organizations involving a machine-bureaucratic respectively a post-bureaucratic has proved fruitful as well. However, it is neither the theory applied nor the organizational form under scrutiny that matters – it is the ambition to go beyond, experiment and to confront prevalent taken-for-granted dogmas by studying diversity in its empirical, organizational setting in the quest for pursuing more emancipative organizational practices.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of a collection of four articles aimed at critically exploring how diversity and its management are organized in two Danish organizations. The articles are based on a critical ethnographic study of the links among diversity and its management, and the structural setting, including the greater historical-societal structures, the organizations' structural setup and the spatial structures. Throughout the dissertation, I focus on how this structural setting enables and constrains the local organizing of diversity. This structural focus allows me to explore how structural conditions facilitate or restrain employee agency, and enables me to suggest locally relevant and progressive ways of organizing diversity. Consequently I ask the following main research question: *How do the greater historical-societal setting, the organizational setup and spatial structures both enable and constrain organizing diversity in the two case organizations, and what are the implications for the management of diversity and employee agency?*

Each of the articles answers a segment of the main research question.

The first article constitutes a theoretical contribution by exploring the connections between identity and diversity literature which have so far not been reviewed systematically. In addition, it serves to situate my approach to organizing diversity by drawing up the theoretical landscape of contemporary diversity research (literature review). The article draws up the frontiers of a polarized diversity field between proponents of mainstream diversity management and the critical and post-structural perspectives – the latter taking their outset in a critique of the first mentioned – and deliberates how this polarization constrains the ability to create new knowledge. Instead a multi-perspective approach is suggested formative to the theoretical and methodological approach applied in this study.

The key concern of the second article is to highlight the interplay between diversity in its organizational setting and then the greater historical-societal structures. The article

analyzes how the greater historical-societal structures unfold at organizational level to demonstrate the entwinement of micro and macro imbued in an embedded approach. Center of attention in this article is to analyze how the historical-societal structures both enable and constrain organizing diversity at corporate level. As such we do not generalize about the effect of the greater historical-societal setting but inquire how it unfolds in a particular organizational setting at a particular point of time.

The third article challenge a key assumption within critical diversity research scorning the bureaucratic form as incarnating inequality while post-bureaucratic, collaborative organizations are seen as more prone templates for fostering equality. Contradictory the article illustrates how key characteristics of the post-bureaucratic form constrain organizing diversity in an empirical study. The intention is to disrupt any unproductive, theoretically assumed causal link between a certain organizational structure and form, and then an organizations ability to foster equality. That being said, the article maintains that every structure and form will inherently involve both enabling and constraining potentialities that practitioners need to take into consideration. As such, the article underlines the necessity of a structural agenda to expand the scope of contemporary diversity research to move beyond stylized typologies and theoretical assumptions. It is suggested that this is done by grounding research more firmly in empirical studies exploring the actual local interplay between structural setup, diversity and emancipatory aspirations.

The fourth article takes up an aspect of the organizational structure that is rarely granted much attention within diversity research. Theoretically and empirically I analyze how an explicit focus on spatial structures offers valuable insights into the more subtle workings of power, privilege, and disadvantage in relation to organizational substructures of inequality. The article argues that a spatial approach can illuminate the entanglement of structure and

agency to grasp how organizational substructures of inequality simultaneously stabilize and change by means of employee spatial practices, as they are not merely imposed on but also actively reproduced and bolstered through employee agency. The study sensitizes practitioners to the situated quality of workplace diversity and to develop a broader scope of HRM practices to address the more subtle, spatially embedded forms of inequality.

From these findings, I conclude that the main insight from doing this research is the necessity to study and practice embedded diversity by bringing all the structural aspect into consideration *simultaneously* to draw up the fine grained, complex organizational landscape in which diversity processes and practices are nested. I propose the notion of organizing diversity to highlight the organization as the epicenter and focus of attention for this kind of research on diversity in action. Accordingly, the dissertation contributes to diversity research by prompting a multi-perspective approach to align a polarized research field. That is to enable critical *and* practically oriented scholarship. I further more propose intervention-based critical ethnography as the method to explore the structural tensions of organizing diversity.

DANSK RESUMÉ

Denne afhandling består af en samling af fire artikler, som kritisk udforsker, hvordan diversitet og ledelsen heraf bliver organiseret i to danske organisationer. Artiklerne er baseret på et kritisk etnografisk studie af forbindelsen mellem diversitet og diversitetsledelse og den strukturelle indlejring i den historisk-samfundsmæssige sammenhæng, organisationens strukturelle set-up og organisationens rumlige struktur. Gennem afhandlingen fokuserer jeg på, hvordan den strukturelle indlejring muliggør og begrænser organiseringen af diversitet. Dette strukturelle fokus tillader mig at udforske, hvordan de strukturelle betingelser både faciliterer og begrænser medarbejdernes handlinger, og tillader mig at foreslå relevante og mere progressive måder at organisere diversitet lokalt. Jeg stiller følgende forskningsspørgsmål: *Hvordan muliggør og begrænser den større historiske-samfundsmæssige sammenhæng, det organisatoriske setup og de rumlige strukturer organiseringen af diversitet i to case organisationer, og med hvilke konsekvenser for ledelsen af diversitet og medarbejdernes handlemuligheder?*

Hver enkelt af artiklerne besvarer en del af forskningsspørgsmålet.

Den første artikel består af et teoretisk bidrag gennem en undersøgelse af relationen mellem identitets- og diversitetslitteratur. Denne relation er endnu ikke blevet undersøgt tilbundsgående. Dertil positionerer artiklen min tilgang til organiseringen af diversitet ved at give et overblik over det teoretiske landskab der udgør den nutidig diversitetsforskning (litteraturgennemgang). Artiklen optegner et polariseret diversitetsfelt med fortalere for mainstream diversitetsledelse (diversity management) på den ene side og kritiske og poststrukturelle perspektiver på den anden side. De sidstnævnte perspektiver tager deres udgangspunkt i en kritik af det førstnævnte. Artiklen udfolder hvordan polariseringen begrænser muligheden for at skabe ny viden. Som syntese bliver der foreslået et

multiperspektiv, og dette multiperspektiv er samtidigt formativt for den teoretiske og metodiske tilgang der anvendes i afhandlingen.

Den anden artikel fokuserer på samspillet mellem diversitet i den organisatoriske sammenhæng og den større historiske og samfundsmæssige kontekst. I artiklen analyseres hvordan de større historiske og samfundsmæssige strukturer udfolder sig på organisatorisk niveau, og hvordan mikro og makro niveau er indlejret i hinanden. Artiklens omdrejningspunkt er analysen af, hvordan den større historiske og samfundsmæssige kontekst både muliggør og begrænser organisering af diversitet på virksomhedsniveau. Der er ikke tale om en generalisering af effekten eller betydningen af den samfundsmæssige og historiske sammenhæng, men alene en undersøgelse af, hvordan den udfolder sig i en bestemt organisatorisk sammenhæng på et givent tidspunkt.

Den tredje artikel udfordrer den hovedantagelse inden for kritisk diversitetsforskning, at bureaukratiet inkarnerer ulighed mens postbureaukratiske teambaserede organisationsformer ses som mere fordrende for lighed. I modsætning til denne antagelse viser artiklen i et empirisk studie, at det netop er de særlige postbureaukratiske træk ved case-organisationen, der hindrer lighed og organiseringen af diversitet. Intentionen med artiklen er således at forstyrre uproduktive, teoretisk baserede kausale sammenhænge mellem en særlig strukturel form og så organisationens evne til at skabe lige forudsætninger for medarbejderne. I artiklen argumenterer jeg for, at enhver organisatorisk struktur og form vil indebære både mulighedsskabende og begrænsende potentialer og elementer, som praktikere må tage i betragtning. Derfor er det nødvendigt med en strukturel agenda, der udvider den nuværende diversitetsforskning fokus til at omfatte et situeret perspektiv der når hinsides stiliserede typologier og teoretiske antagelser. Det foreslås, at dette gøres ved at forankre forskningen i empiriske studier i organisationer,

som udforsker det lokale samspil mellem det strukturelt set-up, diversitet og organisationens emancipatoriske ambitioner.

Den fjerde artikel udfolder et aspekt ved organisatoriske strukturer, nemlig rumlige strukturer, som sjældent får meget opmærksomhed inden for diversitetsforskningen. Teoretisk og empirisk analyserer jeg hvordan et eksplicit fokus på rumlige strukturer giver et værdifuldt indblik i mere subtile virkemåder af relationel magt, privilegier og begrænsninger, der ligger indlejret i organisatorisk substrukturel ulighed. I artiklen argumenteres for, at en rumlig tilgang kan synliggøre sammenhængen mellem struktur og handling. Den rumlige tilgang giver mulighed for at undersøge hvordan organisatorisk substrukturel ulighed på samme tid stabiliseres og forandres gennem medarbejderes rumlige praksisser. Den organisatoriske substrukturelle ulighed er således ikke kun påtvungen, men bliver også aktivt understøttet og forstærket gennem medarbejdernes handlinger. Studiet giver praktikere blik for den situerede, indlejrede kvalitet ved arbejdspladsdiversitet, og for behovet for at udvikle et bredere spektrum af HRM praksisser, der adresserer de mere subtile, rumligt forankrede former for ulighed.

Ud fra disse resultater konkluderer jeg, at hovedindsigten for denne afhandling er et behov for at studere og praktisere indlejret diversitet, hvor de strukturelle aspekter tages i betragtning. Dette for at optegne det finmaskede, komplekse organisatoriske landskab, som diversitetsprocesser og praksisser er indlejret i. Jeg foreslår begrebet 'organisering af diversitet' for at understrege organisationen og organiseringsprocessen som omdrejningspunkt og genstand for fokus for forskning af diversitet i praksis. Dertil at denne forståelse for organisatorisk diversitet som indlejret i organisationens strukturer kan bane vejen for at udvikle metoder og praksisser, der kan ændre organisationen til fordel for emancipatorisk organisering, hvor medarbejdere kan deltage på lige fod og frit udfolde deres unikke kompetencer og identiteter. Således bidrager denne afhandling til

diversitetsforskningen ved at tilskynde til et multiperspektiv, der samler et polariseret forskningsfelt. Multiperspektivet handler om at fremme både kritisk og praktisk orienteret forskning. Dertil foreslår jeg interventionsbaseret kritisk etnografi som en metode til at udforske den strukturelle spænding forbundet med at organisere diversitet.

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APPENDIX 1: OVERVIEW OF FIELDWORK IN AGENCY

FUNCTION	BACKGROUND, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND GENDER	DATES
FOUR CORE RESPONDENTS		
International consultant Initially in trainee position but in a permanent position after six months	Spanish Humane science Woman	Four interviews Nov 2012, June 2013, March 2014 and Sept 2014 Observation Job interview Dec 2012 Employee development interview with section manager 1 March 2013
Section manager	Local background Political science Woman	Four interviews/dialogues March 2013, April 2013, 2 x May 2013, June 2013, July 2013, Feb 2014 Mail correspondence Aug 2013 to Jan 2014
Consultant and political/strategic tasks (Union representative)	Local background Political Science Man	Two interviews Nov 2012 and April 2013
Chief consultant	Local background Master in Arts Man	Three interviews Nov 2013 (Skype), April 2014 and Oct 2014
INTERVIEWS	BACKGROUND, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND GENDER	DATES
CEO	Local background Political Science Man	June 2013
Section manager	Local background Political Science Man	June 2013
Chief Consultant /political- strategic tasks	Local background Political Science Man	Nov 2013
Ethnic consultant	Former Yugoslavia Business Diploma Man	Jan 2014
Ethnic consultant Training position	Korea Business Diploma Woman	Observation Job interview Dec 2013 Interview Dec 2013
Trainee position	Local background	Nov 2013

	Accountant Woman	
Chief consultant/advisor	Local background Technical training Man	Dec 2013
Ethnic consultant	Algerian Business Diploma Man	Dec 2013
Consultant/ political-strategic tasks	Turkish-Danish Humane science Woman	Nov 2013
Consultant/advisor	Local background Graphic designer Man	Dec 2013
Chief consultant/ political-strategic tasks	Local background Social Science Woman	Dec 2013
Ethnic consultant	India Formerly self-employed Woman	Dec 2013
Chief Consultant/ political-strategic tasks	Local background Political science Woman	Dec 2013
Project position	Tunesian-Danish Political Science Man	Feb 2013
INTERVENTIONS	CONTENT AND TYPE OF DATA	DATES
Focal group interview with eight employees (both section managers and employees)	Official report on their diversity work was made on the basis of the interview - Recorded	May 2012
Oral presentations: Diversity and Innovation Dialogue and conflict	Theoretical and debating practical implication for Agency Field notes	Feb 2013 April 2013
Two Day seminar on collaboration patterns and diversity climate in the section Five preparatory meeting with planning committee (6 unit members, section manager and researcher)	Assessing main problems to address as well planning in detail the two day seminar Day one: Exercise - Collaborative patterns and team identities/diversity climate in the section, teams and information workgroups - Recorded Day two: Mapping of 'multiple competencies' in	April 2013

Two day seminar, participants: all members of the section i.e. two formal teams and five informal workgroups, app. 50 employees including a section manager - Facilitated by researcher	respectively current workgroups and fictive more 'mixed' groups (illustration of the enhanced capacity of mixed groups). Tavistock circle talk on cooperation and experiences with diversity - Partly recorded/field notes	
Follow up on two day seminar	Follow up on exercises on collaborative patterns and 'multiple competencies' in teams - Recorded	May 2013
Day one (half day seminar)	Presentation of my findings: Paradoxes and dilemmas with organizing diversity in Agency	June 2013
Day two (full day seminar)	Exercise and product: Plan for rotating teams and time frame for its implementation - Partly recorded/field notes	
Focal group interview (two employees)	Experiences and feedback on the two day seminar on coloration and 'multiple competencies' - Field notes	June 2013
OBSERVATIONS	CONTENT/DATA	DATES
12 Job interviews voting including deliberation and votation	Assessment committee with two section managers, a chief consultant and local union representative – Recorded	Two full days Dec 2012
16 team and section meetings	Ongoing themes and issues - Field notes	Nov 2012 to July 2013
'Identity day' one day workshop for the whole center	Definition of a shared identity including formulation of shared values (including values on diversity and its management) - Field notes	Dec 2012
Center meetings	Field notes	Dec 2012 to June 2013
Attractive workplace process	External consultancy process aimed at creating a more attractive workplace by formulating shared, overall values and strategy. Motivated by poor employee satisfaction report (Jan 2013)	Feb 2013
Introductory meeting with the external consultants		
Two preparatory meetings with the external consultants and the management team	Field notes	Feb 2013
First one day seminar with exercises the whole center		March 2013

Second one day seminar with whole center		June 2013
Feedback meeting with external consultants and management team together with employee representative (union and cooperative committee)		June 2013
Meeting in the management group with CEO as chair	Field notes	Feb 2013
One day Team development seminar (at a team members private apartment)	Field notes	Nov 2012
SOCIALIZING		
Occupying desk and chair two/three days a week	Daily field notes	Oct 2012 to June 2013
Daily lunch and coffee breaks	Daily field notes	Oct 2012 to June 2013
Dinner and private party in section	Field notes	April 2013

APPENDIX 2: OVERVIEW OF DATA AND FIELDWORK IN FASTFOOD

Fieldwork in Fastfood is carried out over a period of two years. Below is an overview in a timeline indicating the different time periods for my different methods in the field. Notice that article two contains a table with data from my narrative research in Fastfood (Table 1: Overview of coding of employee stories from Fastfood including minority and majority status combined with major plot of story).

Elements	Data collected	Dates
First fieldwork phase	Visit seven restaurants Semi-structured interviews with 30 employees at all levels in the restaurants Daily fieldwork dairy/notes All interviews are transcribed and coded The data are analyzed and drawn upon in an report for Fastfood	May to Sept 2011
Second fieldwork phase	Visit in 9 restaurant 27 semi-structured group interviews with crew, middle managers and restaurant manager All interviews are transcribed and coded The data are analyzed and drawn into an internal report for Fastfood	
Narrative study	94 employee stories on difference and diversity encounters in their everyday work life All stories are self-authored and self-reflective tales voluntarily submitted (anonymously written) Official report and presentation of the data on a practitioner conference May 2013 (in cooperation with researcher at from CBS)	Oct 2012 to Jan 2013
INTERVENTIONS	CONTENT	DATES
Meeting with HR Office	Continuous meetings and dialogue with HR diversity officers in Fastfood's main office 3 meetings presenting the three reports Approximately six informal briefing and dialogue meetings with diversity consultant (main access point to the organization): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to organize and plan fieldwork phases - to tell about impressions from the field - to discuss possible diversity related interventions/activities from the HRM main office 	May 2011 to June 2013

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