Queering organisation(s)
Norm-critical Orientations to Organising and Researching Diversity

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NORM-CRITICAL ORIENTATIONS TO ORGANISING AND RESEARCHING DIVERSITY

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Queering organisation(s): Norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity

Jannick Friis Christensen
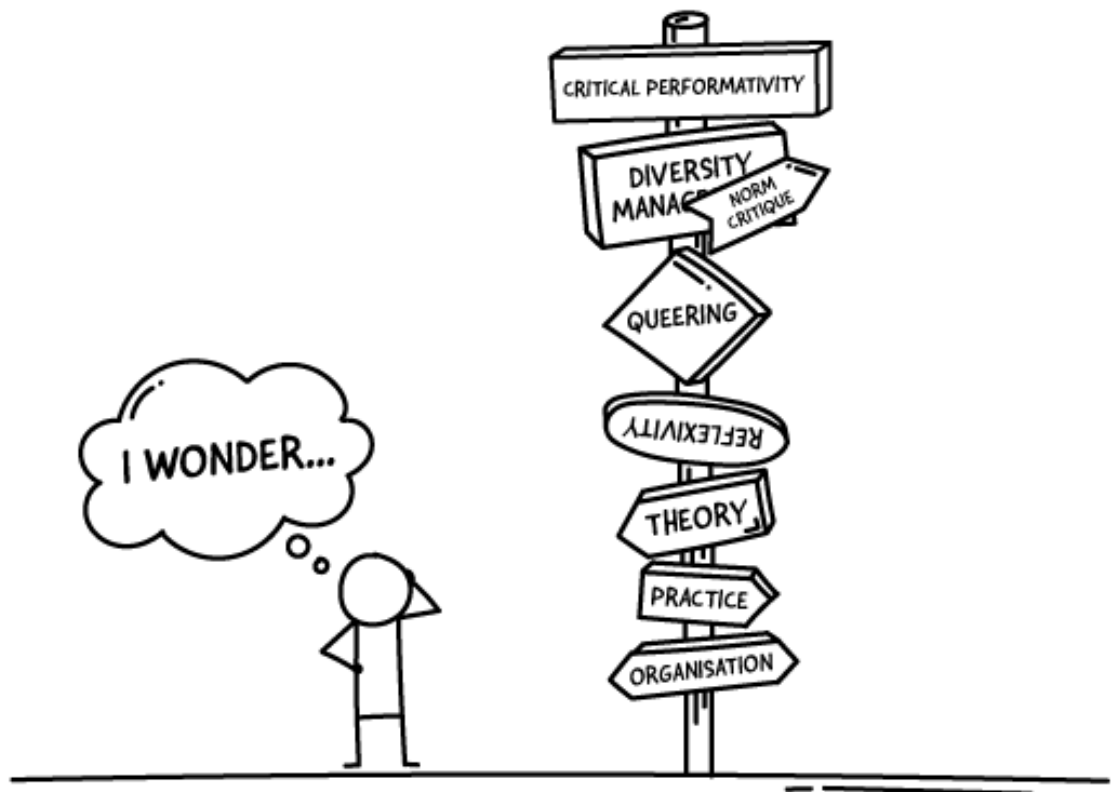
Figure 1: This is not a sign.

Supervisors:

Sara Louise Muhr & Dorthe Staunæs

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies

Copenhagen Business School

Jannick Friis Christensen
Queering organisation(s): Norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity

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Foreword and acknowledgements

I have never written a PhD, nor a foreword. And yet, here I am, doing both. While I'm at it, I might as well seize the opportunity to give thanks to a number of significant others who may or may not know of their own importance in making this dissertation a realilty. It is true that I am the author of it, but 'I' did not write this dissertation - in the sense that it would not have been possible for me to embark on my PhD journey, let alone complete it, were it not for the support of the people whose names I am about to mention. Each of these individuals supported me just the way they were supposed to. Maybe the reader is familiar with the Danish saying '*ingen nævnt, ingen glemt*'. It roughly translates to 'none mentioned, none forgotten' and is used to denote the intention to not leave anyone out – for example in a speech of thanks. But in not naming someone is that not exactly what happens? They get left out, forgotten. So, let me name names.

I would like to start with a queer beginning. My family, to be specific. My husband Lars and our cat: thank you for reminding me what a family can look like, be like – what family is. I fear that I in the latter days of this project have treated my cat as a means to an end (basically as stress-relief) rather than as an end itself. And I know that Lars has had to listen to way too much of my bullshit. For that, I apologise. To Lars: there is a fine line between love and madness, they say. I do not know who 'they' are, but I believe they are right. For I am madly in love with you. It makes me happy to say that I am yours and I am proud that you are mine. I find it meaningful to try my best every day to make it as easy as possible for you to love me. According to Murdoch, love is the extremely difficult realisation that something

or someone other than oneself is real.[1] Love, in other words, cannot be reduced to one particular feeling. It is also a feeling; but love is so much more. First and foremost, I think love is about being-together and worldmaking. Lars, you are not simply a part of my life; you *are* my life, my world. In fact, I am unable to imagine myself without you – which is an extremely difficult and potentially maddening realisation. At least from an individualist perspective. But the true beauty of such realisation is that I only become me when I am with you. I love you, irrevocably and unconditionally.

Sara. Thank you for believing in me, even when I did not. I could not have wished for a better supervisor. Thank you for opening your home to me and for introducing me to your network. This has meant everything to me both personally and professionally. I am forever grateful for your acceptance of supervising my project and for your way of constantly pushing me in the direction of new challenges and opportunities without pushing me over the edge. And thank you for also helping me say 'no' to some of the opportunities that presented themselves along the way. I hope to be able to return the favour some time, and help you say no now and then. When the research we do – our job – gets entangled with social justice issues, it becomes a moral and political activity – a commitment. And that commitment spurs an eagerness to make that difference, which makes a difference. Your supervision, you being you, made all the difference in the world to me. I do not know if I have ever told you this, if not, then I hope you have been able to feel that I really do look up to you and your work. If I in ten years' time manage to do just half of what you have achieved, I will consider myself accomplished.

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[1] Murdoch, I. (1999). Existentialist and Mystics – Writing on Philosophy and Literature. London: Penguin Books.

I would like for my secondary superviser Dorthe to know that you are only secondary in some administrative system. To me, you have been a primary source of inspiration and motivation. Thank you for welcoming me to your research community at Aarhus University and for playing along with my ideas.

A wholeheartedly thank you to my office collective, in particular Thomas, Maria and Bontu. I love what we have done with the place, which does feel like a home away from home. The Danish word '*hygge*' comes to my mind when thinking of the space we have made for ourselves. It is a cozy but also a quirky place, in which we can unleash our creative potentials as, for example, that time when we built a daybed from all the books that were discarded during our department merger.[2] A great many thanks also to the rest of the PhD group for a supportive environment that has made the writing of my PhD a slightly less lonely endeavour. I find it unique how we, in spite of the individual competition in academia, manage to maintain a relationship where we as peers are not afraid to share work-in-progress and also take time to help each other and appreciate the constructive criticism that we can give one another. I have missed out on too many of our bi-weekly lunches these past few months, but do know that I value them greatly as an often much-needed breather from work. In addition to the PhD group I would like to say thank you to the entire Department of Organization (IOA), especially Morten (PhD Coordinator), Signe (Head of Department), Marianne (Head of Secretariat), and Susanne (internal discussant for my first work-in-progress seminar). IOA truly is a fascinating place

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[2] The independent media CBS Wire even made a project video, in which we reflect on the repurposing of the books and the discarded knowledge: https://cbswire.dk/phd-students-build-a-daybed-out-of-discarded-books/.

Thanks also to Fran and Peter for skillful editing. Your professionalism shines through in the attention to detail. And to Niels Peter for your dedication in helping me illustrate my abstract thinking.

A deeply and heartfelt thank you to my friends Stoica, Mia, Bina, Sune, Simon, Nille, Ea – and to my mom Jane, brother Jess, niece Freya and aunt Britta. Thanks for always being there. Know that you can also always count on me to be there for you.

A special thanks to my fellow role players for welcoming me to the group in spite of my character being a bit a cliché and more like me than I intended. Perhaps that is the reason why I identify so strongly with my character, who is a high-elf wizard and way older than he looks. Similar to what scholars are often accused of, my character has spent hundreds of years studying in the 'ivory' tower, which means he sometimes finds himself falling short in terms of social skills when, occasionally, amongst other people. He holds knowledge in highest regard and above all else and, therefore, spends most waking hours with his nose in a book. Did I mention that he prefers the company of a blue dragon hatchling that he magically bonds with? He, however, does not hold back from using his knowledge (mainly of spells) to intervene in the world, always seeking to use his powers to the benefit of the other, cf. the radical demand in Løgstrup's ethics.[3] What bothers him is how he can know what is best for others. Our game nights truly allow me to liberate myself from the research process and take a break from work. Thank you, Tobias (probably the best dungeon master in the world), Magnus, Michael, and Sara for putting up of the oddities of me and my character.

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[3] Løgstrup, K. E. (1956). *Den etiske fordring* [The ethical demand]. Aarhus: Klim.

Last but not least a resounding thank you to the community in Crossfit Copenhagen, especially at my local crossfit box, Centralen. Those who know me well know that WODs (workout of the day) are a vital part of my weekly routines. In fact, five to six times a week on average. Not that I count. But I sometimes wonder if my training regime has gone from a healthy habit to a sick obsession. Over the years, I have come to realise that my time spent doing crossfit and other physical activities (I also enjoy kayaking in the summer and winter bathing) are necessary to bring balance to my work-life. It is probably no surprise to the reader that to work in academia, let alone write a PhD is not the most physically strenuous of activities. Most of the day is spent thinking. And what a privilege that is! I think to write and write to think. Sometimes I think about thinking. It is no exaggeration to say that my job for the past three years has been to exercise my brain.

Research has been and remains largely associated with the mind and all too often becomes disembodied – even though I argue in this dissertation that it can be otherwise. Crossfit has for me been a way of bringing back my body into the equation, a way of becoming body over mind, a way to practice embodied knowledge. In crossfit, once you have learned the basic movements and the Olympic lifts, the body memory kicks in. Crossfit is the one place where I do not have to think. I just do it without giving thought to what 'it' is. I embrace and appreciate how I can feel my body during the daily workout. The soreness the days after. It invigorates me. And I am grateful for this one place where I know, through my body, exactly what is expected of me. Research takes time. Years. Still, you are never quite done. You can always do more. Publish an extra article. Go to one more conference. You never really cross the finish line. Or if you do, it simply moves further out on the horizon. Finishing the daily workout in Crossfit Copenhagen gives an experience of completion and success.

In the end, nothing beats the feeling of fulfilment that is sneaking in on me as I am about to hand in, or, rather hand *over* this dissertation to you, dear reader. I sincerely hope that you will enjoy reading the text as much as I did writing it. This was always about you.

Jannick Friis Christensen

Copenhagen, 31 January 2020

Abstract

This PhD dissertation develops norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity. It does so across four articles, the first of which theorises organisational diversity in relational terms as that, which is excluded from the organisational norm.

The second article conceptualises norm critique as a form of diversity work that shifts focus from the individual to a structural level to critically inquire and intervene dominant norms with the purpose of expanding organisational norms to become more inclusive of the (groups of) people who inhabit them differently.

Whereas the second article conceives of diversity work as changing existing normative institutions, the third article analyses the diversity work done by non-conforming bodies when inhabiting normative organisational spaces differently. The article argues for norm-critical reflection upon researcher positionality, evaluates strengths and weakness of norm critique, and discusses its ethics.

Finally, the fourth article explores the norm-critical potential in knowing alternative ways of organising diversity, thereby reinvigorating discussions about the purpose of and possibility for critical engagement with organisations.

The project situates diversity work as an organisation theoretical discipline. It is based on queer-feminist critiques, whose insights are translated for applicability in organisation and management studies in combination with literature on critical diversity management.

Empirically, the dissertation draws on diverse materials and approaches. Article one uses interview data from 45 leaders in 37 different public and private organisations in Denmark.

Article two is based on participatory observations and collective reflections from norm-critical outreach projects in two different organisation: one that represents LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) people with intersecting minority ethnic backgrounds in a Danish context; and one that organises a collaboration around diversity and equality activities among three of the biggest trade unions in Denmark.

Article three presents the qualitative part of a survey about gender identity and sexual orientation disclosure in workplace organisations among members of a labour union.

Article four writes up an affective ethnography with different embodied readings of organising Roskilde Festival.

In addition to the methodological norm-critical orientations, the dissertation contributes theoretically to extant academic debates in critical management studies about critical performativity and alternative organisation, as well as with methods for both research and practice. It does so, providing answers to the following main research question:

How may organisational diversity be conceptualised norm-critically, and how does said conceptualisation contribute to the study and practice of organising diversity alternatively?

Dansk resume

Nærværende ph.d.-afhandling udvikler, gennem fire artikler, normkritiske tilgange til, hvordan man organiserer og forsker i diversitet. Første artikel teoretiserer organisatorisk diversitet i relationelle termer som det, der bliver ekskluderet af en given organisatorisk norm.

Den anden artikel begrebsliggør normkritik som en form for diversitetsarbejde med fokus på det strukturelle plan, fremfor individniveau. Skiftet foretages for at kunne undersøge og intervenere dominerende normer i organisationer med henblik på at udvide unødigt snævre normer til også at inkludere de (grupper af) mennesker, som 'andetgøres' ved at relatere til normerne på anderledes vis.

Hvor artikel to opstiller diversitetsarbejde som det at ændre eksisterende normativitet i organisationer, analyserer den tredje artikel det diversitetsarbejde, der udføres, når 'ikke-konforme kroppe' bryder med de normative organisatoriske rum. Artiklen argumenterer for normkritisk refleksion over forskerpositioner, evaluerer styrker og svagheder ved normkritik, og diskuterer dens etik.

Den fjerde, og sidste, artikel udforsker det normkritiske potentiale i alternative former for organisering af diversitet. Dette danner basis for en diskussion om formålet med og muligheden for kritisk engagement i organisationer.

I projektet anses diversitetsarbejde for værende en organisationsteoretisk disciplin. Der tages udgangspunkt i queer-feministiske kritikker, hvis indsigter perspektiveres til organisations- og ledelsesstudier i samspil med litteratur om kritisk mangfoldighedsledelse.

Empiri og tilgangen dertil er forskellig for hver artikel. I den første anvendes data fra kvalitative interviews med 45 ledere i 37 danske organisationer på tværs af både den offentlige og private sektor.

Den anden artikel anvender deltagerobservationer og kollektive refleksioner fra normkritiske projekter i to forskellige organisationer. Den første af de to organisationer repræsenterer LGBTQ+ (lesbiske, bøsser, biseksuelle, transkønnede og queer) personer i intersektionerne mellem kønsidentitet, seksuel orientering og minoritetsetniske baggrunde i en dansk kontekst. Den anden af de to organisationer står for et samarbejde om mangfoldighed og ligestilling på tværs af tre af de største fagforeninger i Danmark.

I tredje artikel præsenteres den kvalitative del af en spørgeskemaundersøgelse om åbenhed i forhold til kønsidentitet og seksuel orientering i en arbejdspladskontekst blandt medlemmerne af en fagforening.

Fjerde artikel forfatter en affektiv etnografi, hvormed der udforskes forskellige kropslige erfaringsoplevelser med organiseringen af Roskilde Festival.

Foruden det metodologiske bidrag i de forskellige normkritiske tilgange, bidrager afhandlingen også teoretisk til den igangværende akademiske debat inden for kritiske ledelsesstudier om kritisk performativitet og alternativ organisering. Metodisk bidrager afhandlingen til både forskning og praksis ved at besvare følgende forskningsspørgsmål:

Hvordan kan organisatorisk diversitet konceptualiseres normkritisk, og hvordan bidrager normkritik som begreb til studier af og praksis inden for alternativ organisering af diversitet?

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 STRUGGLE

Struggle. That one word summarises perfectly the research trajectories of this dissertation. The struggle, however, should not be understood as something negative but, rather, as productive. It is struggle that has made my PhD journey eventful in the Latourian sense of the word. In his text 'Trains of Thought' Latour (1996) makes a thought experiment of two persons heading for the same destination yet travelling by different means. One takes the train – a mode of transportation where everything the traveller interacts with along the way is aligned in the same direction as the traveller. Everything is, so to say, on track. The other person sets off her expedition in a deep jungle. Unlike taking the train, no tracks are laid out ahead of the voyager in the jungle; she has to make her own path, step by step, as she cuts her way through the dense vegetation. The jungle leaves marks on her body, thorns that pierce her skin when she manoeuvres a landscape that goes in all directions, not just the one she is heading in. She breaks a sweat from the efforts of negotiating her way with the environment – bushes and branches, scorpions, snakes and spiders as well as a number of others that she meets on her way. It is exactly this complicated negotiation with others that makes the journey through the jungle eventful in comparison to the train ride where nothing happens between boarding the train and alighting at the end destination. Any stops on the train's route are intermediaries that one passes through with nothing memorable, no event happening along the way and therefore nothing to mention from the journey. Cutting one's way through the jungle, thereby creating one's own trail, is, in contrast, more-than-transportation – it is transformation.

This introduction outlines my transformation and, hence, that of my project. While I may not have set off in deep jungle, I most definitely did not jump on a train. I could not, since I did not know my destination. And I have come to realise that what may appear as a destination will, upon arrival, present itself as a new point of departure. It turns out that what I have been bound for with this project is the journey itself. Struggle. I will in this introductory chapter walk you through the struggles, the negotiations I have had to make on my journey. And I will spell out how these negotiations have contributed towards making my journey eventful and, of course, wherein this eventfulness lies. The point – and my reason for bringing up Latour (1996) – is that my conceptualisation of *norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity*, which is the main contribution from my dissertation, has emerged from struggles in my ethnographic fieldwork, from transformative encounters with a number of mediating others. These encounters were possible due to one fundamental premise in the dissertation – namely, that diversity is *of* the body; it is *embodied*. The concepts of norm critique, diversity and embodiment are all central to the project and carefully addressed throughout the entire dissertation, including in the four articles that are the pillars of this project. Diversity takes centre stage in the first article. Norm critique is conceptualised in the second and third. Embodiment is treated in articles three and four. Yet, to follow the trajectories of my PhD, I find it useful to set out some preliminary definitions of the three concepts and how they relate to one another.

Norm critique, as conceptualised in this dissertation, is an analytical orientation toward social norms and how they organise diversity and our study of it. I define what I mean exactly by social or, more specifically, organisational norms in articles two and three. Suffice it to say, norms are *performatively* constituted, meaning they do not exist independent of their repetitions. In other words, norms are not to be

thought of as separate entities, nor as an autonomous structure, even though they may come to appear and function as such. That would be to instill norms with determinism and, crucially, to miss the point that norms remain in place through their iteration, by which they obtain a false state of naturalness. By false, I do not wish to imply that there is a true natural state; I simply want to convey how the naturalness or normality of a given norm is acquired on the back of contingency. There is no necessity to an established norm; it could be different from what it is, as we are often reminded by that or those who deviate from the norm – and on whose exclusion the norm is constituted. When constituted, the norm produces its other, that which is not same as, but different from, the norm, and which, in organisation and management studies, is often signified as diversity. Organising diversity has, as I show in the literature review chapter, historically involved targeting diversity subjects at individual or group levels. Norm critique, as the name implies, targets the norms that give birth to diversity discourse in the first place. Instead of having diversity subjects fit in, norm criticality is about expanding norms to include that which was previously excluded, or changing the norms altogether through their subversion.

Having conceptualised norm critique, I can now define *diversity* as that which is excluded from a given norm. This is another way of saying that diversity is what a particular norm fails to include. Thus, the concept of diversity that I subscribe to in this dissertation is one of *relationality*, an empirical phenomenon that cannot be reduced to the a priori categories normally associated with diversity. The point I make repeatedly in this project is that categories such as gender, sexuality and ethnicity do not just describe diversity; they also performatively produce it. And this happens in relation to that which has become the norm for each respective diversity category. Using an example from the first article, the reason why women, and not

men, are marked by diversity discourse in a Danish managerial context is that women as a group are under-represented. Consequently, men have been and remain over-represented, meaning the norm for management has taken shape from men's bodies. As women are perceived to not embody the male norm, they will inevitably be deemed different from that norm and, therefore, regarded as diverse. Women, in other words, come to embody diversity; they become diversity subjects and have diversity discourse ascribed to them, with very material effects. But diversity is just as much about the male bodies that inhabit the norm against which diversity is measured. In observing, reflecting and, thereby, reinstating the norm, men's bodies become the presupposition for conceiving women's bodies as diversity. This leads me to the third central introductory concept, *embodiment*.

I write that diversity is of the body, that it is embodied, which does not mean that diversity cannot at the same time be discursive – as should be clear by now. It simply means that diversity as discourse is also material, not least to the bodies that are interpellated by said discourse, thereby having diversity imposed on them. My interest in embodiment comes from my epistemological struggle with knowing something to be a norm. How can I become aware of a norm, and how do I know it to be a norm? After all, norms work because we remain largely unaware of them. In spite of their material effects, norms are intangible – so long as one inhabits them. If one does not inhabit a norm, or simply inhabits it differently, it becomes very tangible. As such, the norm is experienced and made sensible through embodied apprehensions of deviating from it. That is, norms are felt. This is hardly controversial to say if, for example, one thinks of how feelings can make us aware of ethical and moral dilemmas. A feeling of unease or, more specifically, a shiver running down the spine can make you realise that something is wrong, that you have done something morally questionable. Awareness of norms stems from bodily

encounters with norms that become apparent as you confront them by not being able or willing to conform to them.

Norms have properties similar to the wall that Ahmed (2017: 135) writes about when stating that diversity work is a 'banging your head against a brick wall job'. She uses the brick wall as a metaphor to explain how the wall, in spite of not being an actual wall, might as well be there because, all the while, the effects of what is there are similar to the effects of a physical wall. And yet, more than that, as she elaborates:

> [I]f an actual wall was there, we would all be able to see it, or to touch it. And this makes an institutional wall hard. You come up against what others do not see; and (this is even harder) you come up against what others are often invested in not seeing. (Ahmed, 2017: 138).

Perhaps institutional walls and norms share properties because the former are built on the foundation of the latter. Translating the quote to my own vocabulary, I may say that the effects of norms are real even if we cannot see or touch the norms. Those for whom the norms work in favour are disinterested in seeing them; they become apparent only when confronted with deviation. In not conforming to a norm you come up against, it is revealed to you but not necessarily to others, who might see diversity instead. You sense the norm when you encounter it as a normative assumption, expectation, stereotype, bias or prejudice. Or when experiencing differential treatment in spite of enacting prescribed or the same behaviour as everybody else – as I write in the third article about disclosure of non-

heterosexuality in workplace contexts. As I argue in the article, to come out of the closet as not heterosexual is to come up against the heteronormative (wall of) expectation(s) that one is assumed heterosexual until further notice. Once notice is given, non-heterosexuality is – as I also show in the article – experienced as excessive from a heteronormative point of view. Non-heterosexual disclosure is taken as a provocation, as something confrontational that spills and overly sexualises the organisation. Therefore, it would seem that embodiment is also about *excess* in the case of those who come to embody diversity, given that they surpass the usual, proper, specified limits of the norm. Holding these three preliminary definitions of norm critique, diversity, and embodiment in the luggage, I now return to the journey itself.

1.2 SETTING A COURSE

My original project proposal had a rather uneventful journey in store for me. I had a travel itinerary prepared that allowed for little deviation from the carefully pre-planned route that would take me from A to B in three years' time. You may say that such an itinerary is not only handy as a travelling companion, so that one knows where one is going, but also sound scientific practice. While the itinerary would indeed have proven useful, it would have been so in a specific way. The usefulness of my original proposal lay with its ability to direct my orientation towards certain objects; that is, particular forms of organising and diversity. I was, in short, to learn from organisations that represented the groups of people typically cast as different and targeted by diversity initiatives in conventional work organisations. Some of the guiding research questions were: How do these alternative organisations go about creating inclusive organisational spaces? How do such organisational practices challenge dominant organisational norms? How can said norm-critical

practices be translated into methods for intervention in organisational practice and managerial discourse in a conventional workplace organisation?
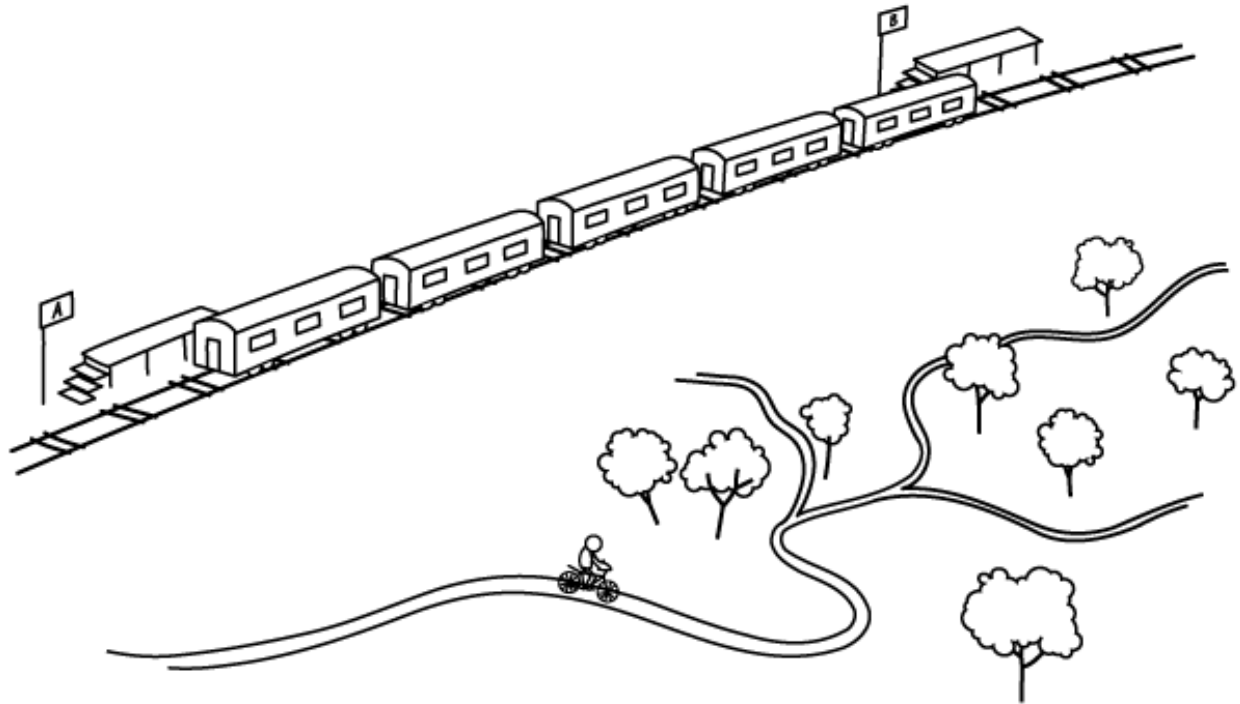
Figure 2: An eventful journey and the roads not taken.

To find answers to the last question, I had been negotiating with a large Danish corporate workplace organisation. During our negotiations it became clear to me that diversity was reduced to gender and, consequently, women, since the diversity issue faced by the organisation was lack of women in management positions. Thus, orientating myself toward this case organisation would have meant delimiting the study of diversity to a number of predefined categories. To move beyond the categories of gender and women did not appear as a navigable road. The problem had already been determined ahead of any analysis, and the quantitative conceptualisation of diversity, as comparison of the number of women and men in

management, would inevitably have affected what may have counted as viable options for solutions to the problem.

Suddenly, the prospect of the original journey did not seem very original; it failed to deliver on my wanderlust and curiosity toward what other forms diversity might take if not bound by the managerial practices and discourses of the corporate organisational form. And so I decided to commence on a different journey – a detour that would cause me to lose ground, become disorientated and, eventually, come to know diversity and its organisation otherwise.

1.3 DIVERTING FROM THE COURSE

Setting a course different from the one I had planned and allowing ample possibilities for it to be an eventful one was anxiety-provoking but also, in the end, rewarding. What makes the journey through the jungle in Latour's (1996) example so eventful, I believe, is how there is no way of knowing where you are going or if the direction you are headed in will turn out to be a dead end from which it is difficult to come back. It is exactly this capacity of not knowing that is cultivated in the jungle; and being unsure of what comes ahead makes it impossible to predict what tools to bring for the journey. You may prepare for any eventuality and still be taken by surprise. What works well outside the jungle may prove useless in the jungle. And you do not know if what you encounter is something you find or if it has found you. I encountered several organisations that got entangled and now form part of my project. So, in addition to replacing the corporate, mainstream organisation with alternative organisations, I also changed or, rather, *queered* my methodology in becoming disloyal to the conventional methods in the research field

that did not serve me, nor my curiosity toward how the alternative could stimulate more sophisticated understandings of diversity and its organisation.

The concept of *queering* is as central to this project as norm critique, diversity, and embodiment. The reason I have not provided any clear definition of queering yet is this: queering as a concept defies any attempt at definition, due to its rejection of categorical thinking. The moment you convince yourself you have defined queering is the moment the definition ceases to be what it presumes to describe – queer. This is because queer is not something one is; it is something one *does*. Hence my use of the term queer*ing* to denote continuous, ongoing action – performativity, if you will. In stating this, I realise that I have somehow managed to produce a minimal definition anyway. And my conceptualisation of norm critique also builds on queer theory in its odd stance toward norms. Equipped with these tentative definitions, we may pick up on the part of the journey where I am about to head off in new directions.

The provisional research question posed in my original project proposal asked: *How can the analytical application of norm critique in the study of organisational diversity can advance new and effective forms of practicing organisational diversity and strengthen the impact of diversity initiatives in practice?* It reveals what was and still is my main research interest – namely, new ways in which diversity may be organised – which, as I will argue in this dissertation, presupposes a break with the way diversity is currently managed and researched in mainstream organisations. Since the question was formulated not in isolation but asked specifically in connection to a mainstream organisation, it fell short in terms of exploring alternative diversity thinking – the boundaries of diversity were already demarcated.

Moreover, from reviewing the extant literature on critical diversity research and practice in organisation and management studies, I realised that I could not jump ahead to the development and application of norm-critical methods; first I had to conceptualise norm critique.

Giving an account of my journey has been my humble attempt to relate some of that which normally goes into a research project – the process – but rarely makes it to the end product, if by end product we have published articles in mind. This dissertation develops *norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity*, and it does so across four articles, of which two are published, one is accepted for publication and another has received the editorial decision 'minor reviews' with an invitation to revise and resubmit.

The first of the four articles theorises organisational diversity in relational terms as that which is excluded from the organisational norm. The second article conceptualises norm critique as a form of diversity work that shifts focus from the individual to a structural level to critically inquire into and intervene in dominant norms with the purpose of expanding organisational norms to become more inclusive of the (groups of) people who inhabit them differently. While the second article conceives of diversity work as changing existing normative institutions, the third analyses the diversity work done by non-conforming bodies when inhabiting normative organisational spaces differently. The third article argues for norm-critical reflection on researcher positionality, evaluates strengths and weaknesses of norm critique and discusses its ethics. Finally, the fourth article explores the norm-critical potential in knowing alternative ways of organising diversity, thereby reinvigorating discussions about the purpose of and possibility for critical

engagement with organisations. The project situates diversity work as an organisation theoretical discipline. It is based on queer-feminist critiques, whose insights are translated for applicability in organisation and management studies in combination with literature on critical diversity management.

Empirically, the dissertation draws on diverse materials and approaches. Article one uses interview data from leaders in both public and private organisations in Denmark. Article two is based on participatory observations and collective reflections from norm-critical outreach projects in two different organisations: one that represents LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people with intersecting minority ethnic backgrounds in a Danish context; and one that organises a collaboration around diversity, inclusion and equality activities between three of the biggest trade unions in Denmark. Article three presents the qualitative part of a survey about gender identity and sexual orientation disclosure in workplace organisations, among members of a labour union. Article four writes up an affective ethnography from the organisation of Roskilde Festival. In addition to the methodological norm-critical orientations, the dissertation contributes theoretically to extant academic debates in critical management studies about critical performativity and alternative organisation, as well as to methods for both research and practice.

1.3.1 Research question

Reading across the four articles that make up this dissertation brings answer to the following overall two-part research question:

How may organisational diversity be conceptualised norm-critically, and how does said conceptualisation contribute to the study and practice of organising diversity alternatively?

In order to answer the research question, one needs to unpack and consider what diversity is in relation to organisation(s). A relevant question that comes to mind concerns how diversity is organised. And to say anything meaningful about organising diversity alternatively entails knowledge about what exactly alternative organisation is. Also, in conceptualising norm critique, I struggled to bring together two concepts and make them one, for what are norms and what is critique? Not taking it for granted, what is it you *do* when critiquing something and when that something – the object of your critique – is norms? Already in phrasing these sub-questions, it is evident that I am tainted by a *performative ontology*: critique is expressed as something one *does*, meaning it is assumed to have performative effects. Norm critique does more than merely criticise its object; it moulds and seeks to change the norm that it critiques. While the individual articles also pick up on these sub-questions, it is the explicit purpose of the chapters that precede them to do so. For example, situating my dissertation within the fields of critical diversity management and organisation studies, the literature review chapter positions diversity as an organisation theoretical discipline, thereby answering the question about what diversity is in relation to organisation(s).

1.4 (UN)PACKING (FOR) THE JOURNEY

In this dissertation, I argue for the application of norm critique to replace that of diversity and inclusion. I do so for several reasons that I unpack in the literature review ahead of presenting the articles in which norm critique is conceptualised.

My reasons for substituting diversity and inclusion for norm critique can be summarised as follows: diversity puts emphasis on the other, on that which is different from the norm. It is this other who is to be included in the norm by the *normal* ones that are already included. Norm critique shifts focus away from the other. It is not the other, the one ascribed with diversity discourse, who is to be fixed in order to fit or overly valued for their perceived difference. With norm critique, it is the norm itself that is (re)evaluated with the purpose of expanding, changing, even subverting it to accommodate that which is excluded and, in that process, comes to appear as diverse due to its deviation from a norm that does not include it. Importantly, norm critique puts the politics back in diversity. As I will show in the literature review, the particular form of organising that diversity has taken in a business context – that of diversity management – is heavily criticised for applying an everybody-is-different discourse, thereby depoliticising the practice in that it becomes ignorant of group-related structural inequalities. As such, diversity management might manage to include difference, but it will be within existing norms and institutions. This brings me to a second point.

Not only do I apply norm critique rather than diversity and inclusion, but also I suggest norm-critical organisation to replace diversity management. A key takeaway from my review of organisation studies literature is that management, historically and as presently practiced, implies control and regulation. To manage diversity, therefore, is to control for diversity, the idea being that regulation may utilise people's differences in such a fashion that they contribute either directly or at least indirectly to organisational outcomes, preferably by increasing productivity and efficiency, in which case it would be more accurate to talk of managerialism and not just management.

Diversity management strongly insinuates that diversity is a practice that someone already included (a manager) does unto the other (those to be included). It is done *for* and *on behalf of* the other, but not *with* the other. Norm critique, with its queer-theoretical roots, is at odds with the norm and grants us insights into how others, who are also odd to the norm, in fact do much of the diversity work. Here I am thinking of Ahmed's (2017: 135) dual definition of diversity work as something non-conforming bodies do when inhabiting normative spaces differently (e.g. downplaying one's difference so as not to disturb the norm and normal functioning of organisation) *and* as the institutional work of banging your head against a brick wall and its normative foundation. Diversity work, from a norm-critical perspective, is something that everybody does. Certainly, it is not the prerogative of management or someone who happens to hold the title of manager. Everybody affects and is affected by the ongoing organisation of diversity, meaning diversity, or rather difference, is a given (a condition) and not something 'out there' (a problem) that can be included. An organisation (as an entity) is constituted based on exclusion, which shapes the boundaries of the organisation. But organisation (as a process) always-already involves difference, as is also acknowledged in the organisation studies literature. The question is *how* it is organised. And that takes me to one final point.

Norm critique, I argue, is an *orientation*. Just like sexuality is often denoted as an orientation that has implications for what objects (or who) desire is directed toward, norm critique is a particular way of orienting ourselves when researching and practicing organisational diversity. And how we are oriented affects not only how we reside in this world, but also how we apprehend it. That is, the ways in which diversity is and may be organised will depend on what diversity concept one subscribes to. The norm-critical orientations that I develop over the course of four

articles present a shift in the types of organisations studied. This shift allows me to grasp the organisation form in a specific way – so too does the shift in research design.

For example, in the corporate workplace organisation that I initially negotiated with, I would most likely have devoted my analytical attention to leadership, training programmes, policies, etc., because these areas were already imbued with diversity discourse. That was not an option in the organisations that ended up forming part of my project. Interestingly, Roskilde Festival (see article four) began working on a diversity policy only after I joined the organisation. This, I believe, is also why I found Roskilde Festival fascinating in the first place: there appeared to be a genuine opportunity for the organisation to affect me *and* for me to affect it back, to exert influence not over but on my case organisation as well as my object of study. The affective capacity in diversity was something I encountered and was able to ascertain in Roskilde Festival – an atmospheric diversity feeling that points to sense of belonging and a more qualitative understanding of diversity, necessarily requiring an approach to organisation different from quantitative numerical accounting of diversity.

1.4.1 Structure and reading guide

This dissertation is article-based, meaning that it consists of four stand-alone articles which, however, when read alongside each other, constitute the PhD project as a whole in providing answers to the main research question. In addition to the articles, the dissertation also includes five chapters, including this introduction (i.e. a total of nine chapters, counting each article as its own), to frame the four articles as one. That is, you can read each article on its own and they are all organised around and

conclude on questions that are specific to the research aim of the individual article. Yet reading them together, and in the particular order presented in this dissertation, the combined body of text delivers in excess of the research focus found in each respective article. That is a promise as much as it is a claim. Consider it an author's contract with the reader. My promise to you. In order for me to deliver on that promise, I, prior to presenting the four articles in succession, provide an overview in which I flesh out how they contribute to answering the overall research question (see chapter four).

Preceding the articles and the overview are another two chapters: the literature review (chapter two) and methodology (chapter three). The literature review, which follows this introduction, serves the purpose of positioning my PhD project within the research fields of critical diversity management and organistion studies, to which it contributes. In reviewing the literature, the chapter addresses some of the previously mentioned sub-questions that need answering before I can conclude on the overall research question. As such, my review of the literature shows how we have come to know organisational diversity so I can proceed to show how it may be conceptualised norm-critically. This leads to the methodology chapter, in which I provide an overview of all the case organisations, methods used and the data produced. I also present the research context for each article and, not least, spell out how I queered my methodology in taking a *post-paradigmatic* approach that would allow for the study of organisational diversity at the intersections of *discourse*, *materiality* and *affectivity*. The four articles (chapters five through eight) are presented at length with no further commentary on my part until chapter nine where I discuss the articles for the purpose of concluding on the main research question. As mentioned already, I do not see the conclusion of this project as the end of my research journey but, rather, as the beginning of the new one. To that end, I will

reflect on the perspectives in my dissertation to further research avenues. And since this is a dissertation and not a suspense novel I might as well reveal that I have already taken the first steps towards the roads ahead that this project points to. What exactly this entails I will revert back to in chapter nine.

2.0 Literature review

I would like to begin this literature review by making the assertion that *diversity is organisation*. That is, diversity is an organisation theoretical discipline shaped by the same or similar movements that the overall field of organisation studies have undergone. To support this claim, I flesh out some of the overall historical developments in organisation studies, including organisational sociology. To this end, the review is structured around the following subsections: 1) organisations as rational systems; 2) organisations as human and social systems; 3) organisations as open systems; 4) organisational structure and culture; 5) power, identity and emotion in organisation; and 6) from organisation as an entity of being to organising as a process of becoming. As the titles suggest, these five subsections contribute to our understanding of what Hatch (2012) calls the three o's, namely organisation, organisations and organising.

My review of the literature is by no means exhaustive. Like March (2004), I think of the organisation studies research community in organisational terms – as fragmented. The interdisciplinary and international field of organisation studies was not created by plan but by 'the uncoordinated and inconsistent actions of ambivalent scholars' (March, 2004: 20). I show how this ambivalence has produced different and, at times, contrasting views of organisation(s) and organisational behaviour. I spell out how organisations have gone from being considered settings to becoming objects of study themselves. And I detail how a turn from (although not away from) an entity-based conception of organisation toward a processual understanding of organising has allowed for an extension of organisation studies through theorisation of emerging organisational phenomena – among them diversity – but also how

diversity understood as difference and differentiation has been considered a coordinating mechanism in some of the writings of prominent organisation scholars. Needless to say, the review is a selective reading of the literature with regard to the purpose of this review; namely, to situate diversity as an organisation theoretical discipline. Diversity, therefore, is the prism through which I read the organisation literature. My selections of what to review and the topics covered are in relation to diversity, which means I discuss themes relevant to diversity; for instance, different assumptions about human nature, tensions of differentiation and integration, and power in organisation(s).

The literature review culminates in a seventh subheading: 7) diversity and its organisation. It presents my reading of diversity in continuation of the preceding subsections on organisation studies. The purpose of reviewing diversity literature alongside that of organisation studies is to substantiate my statement that diversity, in spite of it often being accompanied by the suffix 'management', is in fact an organisation theoretical discipline that cannot be reduced to a managerial approach, for management is but one way of organising diversity. However, management has, as I will also show, become the dominant practice to organise diversity. The practice of managing diversity in organisations draws on a rational model of organisation, whereas criticisms of diversity management apply a human and social – natural – model of organisation. Literature on diversity and its organisation is, as such, tainted by organisation theory – which I explicate in this final part of the literature review. In short, I demonstrate *how we have come to know organisational diversity*. In doing so, I fertilise the grund for my *norm-critical* conceptualisation of diversity and its organisation.

Reflecting on 50 years of organisational sociology, Scott (2004) repeatedly mentions the duality of the rational and natural views of organisation. When he insists on labelling these two views as a dualism rather than, for instance, a binary, it is, I think, because neither view should be given precedence over the other. Organisations are shaped by the dynamic dualism between material resource forces (e.g. technology, size, competitors) on the one hand *and* sociocultural forces (norms and cultural beliefs) on the other. However, I cannot address both at once and so will have to introduce each in turn. Thus, I begin the literature review with the rational approach, specifically Taylor's (1911) scientific management – Taylorism – since this particular notion of science is still prevalent in contemporary organisation(s), exemplified not least by standardised practices for managing organisational diversity. As a final remark, let it be said upfront that with this literature review, I am not objectively outlining the accumulated knowledge of organisation studies. Already in organising the review around, and discussing it in relation to, diversity, I am making subjective (i.e. normative) assessments of the literature, which I critically evaluate and provide commentary on throughout my review of it.

2.1 ORGANISATIONS AS RATIONAL SYSTEMS

Early research interests in organisations did *not* take the organisation as their object of study, for the interest was not in organisations per se. The organisation – the company – was viewed as the setting in which work tasks were conducted, and organisations were, therefore, seen *neither* as their own social systems *nor* as relevant levels or units for analysis (Scott, 2004). For example, the research focus of Taylorism, with its principles of scientific management, was on industrial design with an engineered, bottom-up approach to organisation (Taylor, 1911). Scientific methods should, according to Taylor, replace the rule-of-thumb method, which was

often based on a given manager's past experience and, as such, also often untested and, hence, unscientific. Such experience would be passed on through apprenticeship that, according to Taylor, should be substituted for schooling. The task at hand was to scientifically select the worker who was most likely to perform in accordance with a certain standard, then train, teach and develop that worker – which was also a matter of the worker unlearning the rule-of-thumb method. In Taylor's own words: 'The development of a science involves the establishment of many rules, laws, and formulae which replace the judgment of the individual workman and which can be effectively used only after having been systematically recorded, indexed, etc.' (Taylor, 2011: 27). Thus, scientific management required close cooperation between workers and management to ensure compliance with the scientific method. Work and responsibility were split to workers and managers in that order, meaning that managers would assume responsibility for oversight to monitor and control that workers did what they were told. In this way, work systems would be reformed – and workers deskilled – as standardisations were made and motions of workers were optimised into sequences of tasks that, in turn, were packaged into jobs that were arranged in departments, etc. with the purpose of ensuring predictability; that is, a guaranteed output once the input is known in every detail.

> To Summarize: Under the management of 'initiative and incentive' (the old system) practically the whole problem is 'up to the workman' while under scientific management fully one half of the problem is 'up to the management'. […] The task is planned out by management in advance and specifies not only what is to be done, but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it. Scientific management consists very largely in preparing for and carrying out these tasks. (Taylor, 1911: 27–28)

We can derive from Taylor's (1911) summary that scientific management is about using methods to define one best way for a given job to be done by putting the right person on the job with the correct tools and equipment. Having a standardised method for doing the job, however, is only part of scientific management, which is also about increasing worker productivity (e.g. through the reduction of waste motion) as well as a matter of providing economic incentives; that is, extrinsic motivation to the worker. It is, in this regard, important to stress that Taylor clearly did not have high thoughts about the workers he studied. In his text, Taylor reproduces a conversation with one worker who is presented one-dimensionally as self-serving (hence the need for economic incentives) and slow-witted (why it is necessary for management to assume responsibility for planning the worker's tasks). Taylor phrases his questions to the worker condescendingly, and the worker's Dutch accent is represented in his answers, complete with grammatical errors and mispronunciation (Taylor, 2011: 29–30). It is hardly surprising that Taylor came to believe that humans (workers) are by nature lazy and, thus, in need of extrinsic motivation as well as direction from management in order to be able to do their tasks properly. I mention this because Taylor, in inventing scientific management, simultaneously painted a certain picture of human nature that would justify his scientific approach, and reduced organisations to production machines whose sole purpose was to meet preset ends.

Organisation studies at the time of Taylor, and later Fayol (1916) and Weber (1924), were dominated by a perception of organisations as rational and instrumental entities. Fayol's (1916) analytical focus was management, while Weber (1924) developed ideal-types of rational-legal (i.e. instrumental) administrative systems – better known as design-driven formalised bureaucracies that emphasised

impersonality, technical competence and authority. In short, the bureaucratic organisation has clear division of labour (a characteristic it shares with scientific management), a hierarchy with centralised decision-making, formal rules, selection based on qualifications, and authoritative management. Members of a bureaucracy have power qua their technical knowledge, which is the feature that, according to Weber, makes bureaucratic administration specifically rational (1924: 21).

> Bureaucratization offers above all the optimum possibility for carrying through the principle of specializing administrative functions according to purely objective considerations. Individual performances are allocated to functions who have specialized training and who by constant practice increase their expertise. 'Objective' discharge of business primarily means a discharge of business according to *calculable rule* and 'without regard for persons'. (Weber, 1924: 22, emphasis in original)

Calculable rules are to ensure the reliable functioning of the bureaucratic organisation, and the disregard of persons quite literally means to dehumanise the bureaucracy; that is, to liberate it from the personal, irrational and emotional elements that escape calculation. This rational model of organisations has, however, received heavy criticisms and has seen the introduction of a challenging view that puts to the fore the human side to organisation.

2.2 ORGANISATIONS AS HUMAN AND SOCIAL SYSTEMS

Taylor's assumption that laziness is innate to human nature and, hence, to workers – which resulted in employees being granted little autonomy and no responsibility

– was challenged by a new notion of humans as social animals and corresponding new ideas about employee motivation. This human relations shift is in no small part due to humanistic psychology and what has become known as the Hawthorne effect. The findings from the Hawthorne experiments – a series of productivity studies conducted from the mid-1920s to early 1930s – showed that worker productivity, unexpectedly, increased even as adverse working conditions were imposed. Moreover, the effect of incentive plans was less than expected (which is counterintuitive to scientific management). What can be concluded from the experiments is that *social norms*, group standards, and attitudes influence individual output and work behaviour more strongly than monetary incentives (Homans, 1941). This anthropological and sociological insight about the workings of organisations points to informal patterns, *shared norms* and conflicts (e.g. between, and among, managers and workers/employees), thereby laying the foundation for future studies on organisational culture. As Homans concludes, the increase in the output rate that could be observed among a group of women in one of the experiments could not be related to changes made in the physical working conditions; it could, however, be related to 'what can only be spoken of as the development of an organized social group in a peculiar and effective relation with its supervision' (1941: 90). The role of supervision or observation has led to the Hawthorne effect being known also as the observer effect.

> These events (a steady increase in output regardless of changes to the physical working condition) led the researchers to conclude that they were not simply investigating the effects of changing physical conditions on productivity. One explanation was that employees had been made to feel special by being the focus of so much attention. These feelings increased their morale, which in turn led to higher productivity. The researchers considered that,

inadvertently, they had investigated employee attitudes, values, and norms generated by the experiments themselves – the 'Hawthorne effect'. (Johnson & Gill, 1993: 50)

I will dwell more on the disciplinary force of observation in the subsection about power in organisation. At this point I would like to highlight that, as with the conclusion drawn in the quote above, many of the insights derived from the Hawthorne experiments happened to be at odds with some core assumptions in scientific management and, indeed, the rational model approach to organisation. There was little correlation between economic incentives and productivity, and it became clear that people also derive a source of need satisfaction at work; for example, a sense of belonging to a group. So, the scientific management view of people as socially isolated and economically rational beings was, for a while, replaced by the belief that human beings are basically social animals who gain a sense of identity from social relationships. I write 'for a while' for two reasons. One is that scientific management principles are still in use in contemporary organisation. An example of this is the idea that hiring managers can identify best-fit candidates through universal, objective and neutral standards of measure (Christensen & Muhr, 2019). The other reason is that the two conflicting views of organisations, as either production or social systems, have been synthesised over the years as the field of organisation studies was formed (Scott, 2004). The two views would, as such, turn into a dynamic duality, thereby acknowledging that organisations are *both* production systems and social systems. This was necessary since both views are equally universalistic.

With reference to McGregor's (1966) theories X and Y, we can say that we have: on the one hand, scientific management, which assumes that the average worker has little ambition, dislikes work, avoids responsibility and requires close supervision (theory X) and, therefore, is in need of extrinsic motivation such as economic incentives; and on the other hand, the human relations perspective, which assumes that workers can exercise self-direction, desire responsibility and like to work (i.e. hold an intrinsic motivation) (theory Y). McGregor argues that to the extent that workers show behaviour corresponding with theory X, this behaviour should *not* be taken as an expression of some inherent human nature, nor as a trait or characteristic of workers in general. Human behaviour in organisation is 'a consequence rather of the nature of industrial organizations, of management philosophy, policy, and practice. The conventional approach of Theory X is based on mistaken notions of what is cause and what is effect' (McGregor, 1966: 109).

McGregor (1966) is arguing that scientific management has become *performative* in creating the kind of organisational behaviour that it is said to describe (a similar point is made by many critical scholars about the use of diversity management in organisations – a point that I return to). Simply put, workers become lazy and selfish because they are treated as such through management practices that cater exclusively to those features. In simplistic terms, we may say that since laziness and selfishness are the two characteristics recognised by scientific management, they also become the only characteristics that are rewarded. It is not difficult to imagine that workers, deskilled, in accordance with scientific management, to handle monotonous routine work, over time will exhibit little joy, let alone continue doing their work tasks, if not for the extrinsically induced motivation. Along the same lines, Johnson and Gill (1993: 47) note that 'scientific management can become a

self-fulfilling prophecy: if people are expected to be recalcitrant and economically rational, they are likely to behave in such a fashion'.

MacGregor (1966: 109) finds what he calls the 'conventional' view of scientific management to be inadequate in terms of explaining the human side to organisation. He refers to Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs (often depicted as a pyramid) to describe how lower-order needs (i.e. physiological and safety needs) are met externally, whereas higher-order needs (i.e. social, esteem and self-actualisation needs) are met internally. Once the basic needs are satisfied, they no longer motivate, which leads McGregor (1966: 111) to deduce that 'the carrot and stick theory (i.e. the extrinsic motivation of scientific management) does not work at all once man has reached an adequate subsistence level and is motivated primarily by higher order needs'. Here, it is worth noting that the upper level among higher-order needs may never be satisfied fully and thus continues to motivate. In a work organisational context, the levels from bottom to top of the pyramid could translate into levels of sustenance in the form of a base salary and stability delivered through a pension plan. These two factors – pay and pension – would go a long way in terms of satisfying the two lower-order basic needs. As regards the first level of the higher-order needs, the Hawthorne experiments teach us that, for example, friendship among colleagues in a work group may satisfy the social need for belonging. Self-esteem could be fulfilled through the status associated with a given job title, while self-actualisation could be a matter of achievements made in a job that never ceases to bring new challenges.

The implication of Maslow's (1943) pyramid is that external needs motivate only up to a certain point, at which they are satisfied and after which motivation happens

in relation to internal needs. However, the view remains that a need is either satisfied or dissatisfied, which comes with the assumption that satisfaction and dissatisfaction are two sides of the same coin. Herzberg's (1987) two-factor theory complicates this view and, in fact, replaces it with one of satisfaction and dissatisfaction working according to their own spectra. That is, one can be satisfied or not; and one can be dissatisfied or not. Not to be dissatisfied is not the same as being satisfied; you are just not dissatisfied. To clarify this point, Herzberg's theory explains that 'certain things (motivators) lead to job satisfaction, whereas others (hygiene factors) prevent dissatisfaction but cannot engender satisfaction' (Johnson & Gill, 1993: 62). Motivators roughly correspond with Maslow's (1943) higher-order needs, which means that extrinsic (environmental) motivation such as economic incentives only motivate up to a certain level until that need is basically covered. This is why Herzberg would not categorise pay, for example, as a motivator. Rather, he would categorise it as a hygiene factor: when the pay is right, it is not that workers are not satisfied – they are just not dissatisfied. What creates satisfaction are the internal (psychological) motivation factors such as achievement, recognition and responsibility that workers derive from the work itself as meaningful occupation – that which they, strictly speaking, are deprived of in scientific management.

At this point, a recap is appropriate. Organisation studies have evolved from a view of organisations as means with which to achieve predetermined ends, to one of organisations as social systems with internal and informal workings. The turn to human relations, which was concerned with organisational members' social interaction within work groups, also saw a turn to neo-human relations, which emphasised the individual (Johnson & Gill, 1993). In fact, different portraits of human beings had been painted, from the economic 'high-priced man' found in

scientific management to the gregarious view in human relations and, finally, the self-actualising individual found in neo-human relations. Importantly, all of these perspectives have taken a keen interest in the issue of motivation, which in work organisations refers to 'the processes by which people are enabled and induced to choose to behave in particular ways' (Johnson & Gill, 1993: 39) that are aligned with the attainment of organisational goals. There is, however, a significant difference to be found in the motive for the interest in motivation. Whereas the rational model of organisation seeks to improve management's control through an understanding of human motivation, the human relations approach aims at humanising work by getting rid of needlessly restrictive managerial practices (Thygesen & Tangkjær, 2008). It is possible to observe a similar difference in the motive for the interst in managing diversity between mainstream and critical scholars. I will pick up on this trail when reaching the seventh subheading. For now, let me point to a commonality between the rational and human relation models: their treatment of organisations as closed systems in the sense that the external factors presented by the environment were not taken into consideration. An organisation was regarded as a closed system functioning in isolation of its surroundings. This was about to change.

2.3 ORGANISATIONS AS OPEN SYSTEMS

To say that organisation studies went from a closed view of organisation, concentrated predominantly on actors (workers, work groups, managers) and processes (motivation, cohesion, control), to a view of organisation as open systems is to say that the environment in which organisations operate was also deemed relevant for organisational analysis. In fact, Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) state that organisations vary as a function of their technical environment. That is, organisational structure is contingent on the environment in which the organisation

operates. Consequently, there can be no one universal set of management principles, nor one ideal organisational structure, given that individual organisations are different due to the dissimilar situations (contingency factors such as size, technology and certainty with regards to the environment) they face. The authors' definition of organisation combines two conflicting forces: differentiation and integration. These are in an antagonistic relationship for the simple reason that the more differentiated an organisation is, the less integrated it will be, and vice versa.

> An organisation is defined as a system of interrelated behaviours of people who are performing a task that has been *differentiated* into several distinct subsystems, each subsystem performing a portion of the task, and the efforts of each being *integrated* to achieve effective performance of the system. (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967: 3, my emphasis)

It is clear from the quote above that conceiving of organisations as systems means thinking of them as consisting of parts (subsystems) that form a unified whole. The parts are co-dependent in that changes in one part of the system will inevitably affect other parts of the system. And in spite of being defined as that which is outside of the organisation, the environment may also affect the performance of the system – hence the need for considering environmental factors. Institutional theory is one way in which the environment is taken into account in organisation studies. Institutional theory stresses the importance of the cultural features of environments, arguing that organisations must consider not only their technical environment (cf. Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967) but also their institutional environment; that is, regulative, *normative* and cultural-cognitive features that define the social fitness of organisations. From this perspective, DiMaggio and Powell (1983) ask why there is

such startling homogeneity of organisational forms and practices. Organisations are not always rational and efficient but are subject to institutional isomorphism – 'a constraining process that forces one unit in a population (i.e. organisations of the same type) to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 149). The authors point specifically to coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphic forces.

Mimetic isomorphism, for example, is said to take place as a standard response to an uncertain environment, which causes organisations to model themselves on other organisations that are perceived to have a successful design. Hence, the isomorphic process is one of imitation. And as DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 152) state: 'The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency.' In other words, none of the three isomorphic forces ensures that conforming organisations will run more efficiently than their deviating peers. Another example is normative isomorphism, which stems from professionalisation and works through the socialisation of individuals into a given occupation, profession or domain of expertise, thereby aligning expectations and ensuring corresponding behaviour that is recognised as appropriate in the trade or industry. DiMaggio and Powell draw on the work of Kanter (1977), which I will also attend to later in my review, to exemplify the homophily of management as they see it: 'To the extent that managers and key staff are drawn from the same universities and filtered on a common set of attributes, they will tend to view problems in a similar fashion, see the same policies, procedures, and structures as normatively sanctioned and legitimated, and approach decisions in much the same way' (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983: 153).

Whereas DiMaggio and Powell came to the conclusion that isomorphic forces allow for little variance in organisational structures, Hannan and Freeman (1977) reached the opposite conclusion several years earlier; namely, that there is much diversity to be found between the many and different kinds of organisations that exist. They focus on competitive isomorphism and state that 'the diversity of organisational forms is isomorphic to the diversity of environments' (1977: 939). Translating this statement, we may say that insofar as we can identify different environments, each dictating different optimal organisational behaviours, we will also be able to observe different combinations of organisations that are optimal to the specific environments they operate in. It is not the organisations adapting to their environment as much as it is the environment selecting optimal combinations of organisations – a rationality of natural selection. What I would like to emphasise from the opening up, in organisation studies, of organisations to their environments is the move from a view of organisational structure as determined by the environment with organisations pursuing efficiency alone to a view that organisations are not necessarily efficient and that cultural approaches are needed to explain pathologies. Put differently, organisations consist of conscious actions *and* of unconscious processes. I will in the next sub-section address both as organisational structure and culture, respectively.

2.4 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE AND CULTURE

2.4.1 Structure

The definition of organisation provided by Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) acknowledges a conflictual relationship between differentiation and integration, which move in opposite directions. In a similar vein, Mintzberg's (1983) definition of organisational structure takes into account the opposing requirements of dividing

labour into various tasks to be performed and coordinating these tasks to accomplish an activity: 'The structure of an organisation can be defined simply as the sum total of the ways in which its labour is *divided* into distinct tasks and then its *coordination* achieved among these tasks' (1983: 2–3, my emphasis). Structure has been a recurring, albeit not always explicit, theme throughout the previous subsections. For example, to DiMaggio and Powell (1983), an organisation's structure is the result of institutional isomorphism. The human relations approach to organisation emphasised informal structures over formal ones. Taylor (1911) and Weber (1924) both addressed structure as a matter of standardising work. To Mintzberg (1983), organisational structures are configurations of design parameters and situational factors. Design means setting the system in a way that influences the division of labour and the coordinating mechanisms, thereby changing the organisation's functioning, which, in turn, assumes discretion and an ability to alter the system. And consistent with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) isomorphism, there are, according to Mintzberg (1983: 147), at the end of the day, a limited number of successful configurations. In addition, sometimes fads and fashions get to dictate a given organisational structure, whether appropriate or not, speaking to a degree of irrationality in organisation.

Whereas the work of Weber (1924), for example, is prescriptive in presenting ideal types of organisation (i.e. how organisations *ought* to be structured according to criteria of objectivity and rationality), Mintzberg's (1983) work is descriptive, meaning his models explain how organisations are actually organised. He mentions five coordinating mechanisms that he considers to be the most basic elements of structure, 'the glue that holds organisations together' (1998: 4). Three of these mechanisms – specification of work processes, output, or skills and knowledge – are related to standardisations akin to scientific management. The two remaining

mechanisms are mutual adjustment, achieved through informal communication, and direct supervision, where a manager takes over the coordination by issuing instructions; the latter bears resemblance to Fayol's (1916) principles of management, in particular unity command.

Mintzberg (1983) observes that the various coordination mechanisms are contingent on situational factors, such as the size of an organisation. That is, a small organisation with a simple and flat structure (say, an entrepreneurial start-up company with two owners as its only organisational members) is likely to achieve coordination through mutual adjustment, since it is relatively easy for the two members of the organisation to coordinate activities between them. However, as the company grows and new employees join the organisation, the favoured coordinating mechanism will shift to direct supervision and then standardisation. The simple reason for this is that the need for coordination emerges as a function of the complexity of the organisation. As the division of labour becomes still more intricate, the coordination of said labour becomes pivotal to ensuring that it is organised; that is, aligned with organisational goals.

In addition to the five coordinating mechanisms, Mintzberg (1983) also presents five basic parts of organisational structure as well as a typology of five ways in which the coordinating mechanisms and parts can be configured. It is beyond the scope of this literature review to elaborate on all of these configurations given that the purpose of reviewing organisation studies is to be able to inscribe diversity as an organisation theoretical discipline. To that end, I find it more relevant to mention that Mintzberg (1980) speculated on a sixth structural configuration, that he calls the missionary configuration. This configuration 'relies for coordination on

socialization – in effect, the *standardization of norms*; it uses indoctrination as its main design parameter; and its dominant part is *ideology*, a sixth part, in fact, of *every* organization, representing a pull towards a sense of mission' (1980: 339, my emphasis). Unlike the other five configurations, which all are concerned with the formal structure of organisation, this sixth candidate appears to capture and also rely on more informal workings of organisational structure – what we may examine as organisational culture.

2.4.2 Culture

If structure is about numbers and types of units, then culture is about how the structure of the units plays out. Structure emphasises division of labour and communication among units and people – flows (see e.g. Mintzberg & Van der Heyden, 1999). Culture highlights how people speak to each other (or not) as well as how things are usually – or *normally* – done (norms and regularities). Structure pays attention to competencies (i.e. who is responsible for what) and the formal structures of authority, whereas culture looks at the more informal (everyday) practices. Yet, as Mintzberg (1983: 9) also points out, it is not always possible to distinguish formal and informal structures, since the two are intertwined. This is the reason why I have grouped structure and culture under the same subheading. According to Schein (2004), culture is stable and difficult to influence and change. It is shared and owned collectively, meaning no group, no culture.

> The culture of a group can now be defined as a *pattern* of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal *integration*, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct

way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (Schein, 2004: 17, my emphasis)

Culture is a deep underlying unity, and as Schein (2004: 11) states, 'the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture'. Culture affects organisational behaviour. It disciplines people through socialisation, identity and community. And it affects organisational structure, which becomes a combination of formal and informal workings. There is a depth and a breadth to organisational culture in the sense that – even though it is often unconscious, less tangible – it spreads to all organisational functioning. Culture formation is, as stated in the quote above, a striving towards patterning and integration, which happens through rituals, values, traditions, etc.

Schein (2004) presents three levels of culture, which are often described through the metaphor of an iceberg. The tip of the iceberg resembles artefacts, which are the visible organisational structures and processes that, in spite of their visibility, are hard to decipher. You can observe that people in a given organisation do things in particular, perhaps even peculiar, ways; yet this observation does not help to understand *why* people in the organisation are behaving in these specific ways, nor *how* they have come to do so. Artefacts include all organisational phenomena that one sees, hears and feels when encountering a new culture, including architecture, language, technology, products, clothing, manners, emotional displays, myths and stories, published values, rituals, etc.

Moving downward from the tip of the iceberg to the water's surface, we find what Schein calls 'espoused values'. These are the strategies, goals and philosophies of the organisation; that is, the espoused justifications that can give us some clue as to why organisational structures and processes are the way they are. Espoused values are a group's learned rationalisations and aspirations and may reflect original values (e.g. those of the founder or leader) and represent a shared perception of success. That is, espoused values are the start of processes of cognitive transformation where an original belief is turned into an assumption.

This takes us underneath the water surface to the third and final level where we find the biggest proportion of the iceberg, what Schein (2004) in his definition of culture above labels basic underlying assumptions. These are the base and what keep the iceberg afloat. They are the ultimate source of value and actions, but they are also less explicit than both espoused values and artefacts (the reason why they are compared to the part of an iceberg that is hidden under water); they consist of unconscious, taken-for-granted, non-questionable beliefs, perceptions, thoughts and feelings. Underlying assumptions are, in other words, theories-in-use that have gone from a hunch to becoming organisational reality.

> When a solution to a problem works repeatedly, it comes to be taken for granted. What was once a hypothesis, supported only by a hunch or a value, gradually comes to be treated as a reality. We come to believe that nature really works this way. […] Basic (underlying) assumptions, in the sense defined here, have become so taken for granted that you find little variation within a social unit. The degree of consensus results from repeated success in implementing certain beliefs and values, as previously described. In fact, if a

basic assumption comes to be strongly held in a group, members will find behavior based on any other premise inconceivable. (Schein, 2004: 30–31)

Schein (2004: 12), in other words, writes that shared assumptions derive their power from the fact that they begin to operate outside awareness and are taken for granted. Culture, in this way, can become a form of organisational control – an ideology – just like Mintzberg (1980) predicted with his missionary configuration that operates through standardisation of norms. Another word for this kind of ideology is 'religion', as Kunda (1992) shows:

Power plays don't work. You can't *make* 'em do *anything*. They have to *want to*. So you have to work through the culture. The idea is to educate people without them knowing it. Have the religion and not know how they ever got it! (Kunda, 1992: 353, emphasis in original)

These words are not Kunda's (1992), but come from one of the Tech (company pseudonym) employees studied – a 'Techie'. Kunda defines this way of living and breathing an organisation's culture as *normative* control, as the 'attempt to elicit and direct the required efforts of members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions' (1992: 356). Employees, in other words, internalise the values of the organisation and act accordingly, but not because they are coerced to do so. As the culture is internalised by employees, it, in a sense, replaces formal structure, meaning it is no longer work tasks that are standardised (cf. one of Mintzberg's (1983) five coordination mechanisms). Rather, it is the employee's relationship with herself that is standardised to fit the organisation's

culture (cf. Mintzberg's (1980) suggestion of an ideological part that relies of the standardisation of norms). This form of organisational control has spawned a separate research agenda on organisations' roles in regulating identities (and thereby also diversity insofar as it draws on social identity categories); that is, regulating the 'inner' selves of employees to produce the appropriate individuals. I shall elaborate on identity and also emotion in organisation studies in the next subheading. First, I see it necessary to highlight alternatives to Schein (2004), whose work does not stand uncontested.

Organisational culture from the perspective of Schein (2004) is something that gives structural stability. It serves to *normalise* irrational behaviour (irrational as judged from the state of normality that is the existing culture). It is the way that things are done. But his view on culture in organisations is extremely functionalistic: culture is something organisations *have*. And the purpose of a culture is to ensure integration. This becomes clear from his view on organisational change:

> Such learning is intrinsically difficult because the reexamination of basic assumptions temporarily destabilizes our cognitive and interpersonal world, releasing large quantities of basic anxiety. Rather than tolerating such anxiety levels, we tend to want to perceive the events around us as congruent with our assumptions, even if that means distorting, denying, projecting, or in other ways falsifying to ourselves what may be going on around. It is in this psychological process that culture has its ultimate power. Culture as a set of basic assumptions defines for us what to pay attention to, what things mean, how to react emotionally to what is going on, and what actions to take in various kinds of situations. (Schein, 2004: 31–32)

Change is a matter of unfreezing the culture in order to make changes, after which the leader refreezes the culture. As such, culture – and the organisation – is taken as something static, an organisation-wide phenomenon with little to no variance. Culture is, after all, a shared narrative that presupposes consistency and consensus, meaning any ambiguity is rejected. The culture is what makes an organisation unique; it is what allows members of the organisation 'Tech' in Kunda's (1992) text to refer to themselves as 'Techies' when identifying themselves with the organisation. Other views in organisation studies treat culture as either something organisations *are* or something they *do* – or both. Hatch (1993), for instance, extends Schien's (2004) work with a dynamic model that emphasises processes of cultural symbolisation. Another example is from Meyerson and Martin (1987: 623), who write about cultures (plural) as socially constructed realities and treat cultures as a metaphor for organisation and not just as a discrete variable to be manipulated at will. From such a vantage point, organisations are viewed as patterns of meaning, values and behaviour. They list three cultural paradigms to explain their own contradictory statement that organisational cultures can be resistant to change, incrementally adaptive and in constant flux. The paradigms are: 1) integration; 2) differentiation; and 3) ambiguity.

The first paradigm, integration, corresponds with Schein's view of culture. The first and second put together present a structural view of organisational culture, congruent with Lawrence and Lorsch's (1967) differentiation and integration mechanisms: 'In cultural terms this means that an organisation would probably be composed of a *diverse* set of subcultures that share some *integrating* elements of a dominant culture' (Meyerson & Martin, 1987: 631, my emphasis). The differentiation paradigm opens up an understanding of culture as influenced by

disagreements in the organisation rather than consensus alone. Culture from this perspective is driven by professional groups, divisions, hierarchies, etc., and it includes subcultures that overlap. Ambiguity is not rejected but channelled to the different subcultures, and change happens incrementally at a local level – not universally as a revolution that overthrows everything that came before. The third paradigm, ambiguity, corresponds more with a processual understanding of organisation: 'One metaphor for paradigm 3 enacted culture is a web. Individuals are nodes in the web, temporarily connected by shared concerns to some but not all the surrounding nodes' (Meyerson & Martin, 1987: 638). Instead of rejecting or channelling it, ambiguity is the point of departure. We may say that the only consensus is dissensus, since disorder and paradoxes are what characterise culture and create meaning. Thus, culture is temporary and fluid, and it depends on case-specific cultural agreements. This, of course, also makes it very difficult to draw clear boundaries and explain exactly what culture consists of.

In spite of the differences among cultural approaches to organisations and organisational structure, I find it helpful to clarify that the different definitions of organisational structure and culture share some similarities. Interestingly, they all have in common that they define organisation in terms of a productive tension between diametrically opposed forces. This process has gone by different labels: differentiation and integration, division and coordination, patterning and integration, diversification and integration, each teasing out nuances and placing emphasis on different aspects of organisation, such as culture over structure. But they all stress the dynamism; that is, that organisation consists of *both* a degree of differentiation *and* a level of integration. In spite of the conflictual relationship, given that differentiation and integration each pull in opposite directions, organisation is a function of both factors.

This understanding of organisation as a process of differentiation and integration is fundamental to my argument that diversity is organisation, since the diversity literature applies a similar duality; that of diversity and inclusion. If only diversifying/differentiating at the expense of inclusion/integration, the organisation process results in marginalisation. Inclusion with little or no regard for diversity and difference, however, may easily turn into assimilation. Yet, there is no organisation without exclusion, as the boundaries of any organisation are constituted by that which they exclude. Unlimited inclusion would cause the organisation to become the same as and, hence, indistinguishable from its environment. I will get back to these points under the last subheading about diversity and its organisation. To this end, to be able to address these points properly, I find it beneficial to elaborate on power in organisation – a concern raised in organisational structure and culture alike, and a concern that is closely connected to organisational identities and emotions.

2.5 POWER, IDENTITY, AND EMOTION IN ORGANISATION

According to Scott (2004), issues of power arise as a consequence of organisation. Specifically, he points out how individuals may lose power to their organisations because the two parties – the individual or groups of individuals and the organisation – do not necessarily pursue the same ends. Because rational approaches to organisation have focused on the impact of organisational factors on performance and productivity, organisation sociologists began to ask questions about who benefits from organisational activities – and who does not. Conceptualisations of power are, in general – and in relation to organisation – many, and organisational power is a much-contested field of research. As one example, and as previously

established, Weber (1924) talks of authority when one holds legitimacy to tell someone else what to do. Power, from this perspective, is when a person manages to influence or persuade another person to do one's bidding; that is, do something that the other person otherwise would not have done.

2.5.1 Power

Power is an inescapable force, without which organisations would not function (Fleming & Spicer, 2014: 285–286). As such, power is omnipresent, albeit not necessarily omnipotent. According to Fleming and Spicer's review of the conceptualisation of power in organisation and management studies, power and politics are entwined.

> Politics consists of activity that rearranges relations between people and the distribution of goods (broadly defined) through the mobilisation of power. In turn, power is the capacity to influence other actors with these political interests in mind. (Fleming & Spicer, 2014: 239)

Following this definition, it is not hard to imagine that a person who finds himself on top of the hierarchy in a bureaucratic organisation holds power over others (subordinates) qua that position, which might be legitimised through that person's mobilisation of resources, here understood as (technical) knowledge. And this form of power would be legitimate according to Weber's rational-legal type of authority insofar as the legitimacy of power is founded in the formal rules of the organisation. This would be to conceive of power as something that one can possess, perhaps due to a valued skill or a high-ranking position in the organisation, such as CEO. This

notion of power would go a long way to explaining the politics of organisations from a structure theory perspective.

Power can, however, also be understood in relational terms as something between people – as dynamic and shifting rather than something that belongs to certain organisational members, which would make it possible to elucidate the politics of organisational culture. Fleming and Spicer (2014) make an overall split between what they call episodic (possession) power and systemic (relational) power. Whereas the former relies on identifiable acts that shape the behaviour of others, the latter mobilises institutional, ideological and discursive resources to influence organisational activity. The episodic form of power is, therefore, more visible and explicit than the systemic. As subcategories of episodic power, the authors list coercion and manipulation. Under systemic power, we find domination and subjectification. These are together referred to as the four faces of organisational power. Additionally, Fleming and Spicer (2014) locate four different sites of organisational power. For the purpose of this review, I focus on what they call power *in* organisations; that is, the 'struggles that take place within formal boundaries to influence, maintain, or change hierarchies and *norms*' (2014: 245, my emphasis). I will in the following two paragraphs use their framework as point of reference to describe the four conceptualisations and the different aspects of organisational power that each captures.

A prime candidate for the exercise of coercive power would be bureaucracy with a clear chain of command; that is, the flow of formal authority (cf. Mintzberg, 1983). Power works through clear rules and direct orders with clearly stipulated consequences for not obeying. In this way, power comes to play the dual role of

reducing uncertainty and maintaining organisational stability. And the pecking order may, as said, be established through authority or ownership, or perhaps possession of resources that are vital to the organisation. The other episodic form of power, manipulation, works through the implicit shaping of issues. By mobilising bias through storytelling and narratives, the manipulative form of power limits a given issue by framing it within a certain agenda, thereby potentially preventing the issue from being recognised as such. It should be evident from my description of the two episodic faces of power that both subscribe to a notion of power as something that can be held by someone or something (e.g. by individuals, institutions or organisations) and wielded over someone else. Moreover, it should be clear that any given use of power comes with certain intentions; for example, managerial strategies to secure control. In other words, power has a centre that it emanates from, and it is used with specific (intentional) purposes in mind (Townley, 1998). The main concern is the *why* of power, the intentionality behind its uses and abuses. The systemic forms of power differ in that research inspired by relationality tends to emphasise the *how* of power.

Domination, as one of the two systemic forms of power, constructs ideological beliefs and makes constructed values seem inevitable and natural, thereby making it implausible, if not impossible, to question organisational values. The ideological in domination becomes apparent when considering how it can ensure that a given organisational culture may remain uncontested. The locus of power stems from grand theories – what Alvesson and Kärreman (2000, 2011) call big 'D' Discourse; for example, neoliberal capitalism or ideas from fads and fashion, such as flexibility and excellence. A thought example could be company layoffs that are taken as a necessity due to globalisation, obscuring the fact that the layoffs are a result of prioritisation; that is, of political power plays in organisations (indeed, globalisation

as a phenomenon is by no means a universal necessity). Subjectification, the second of the two systemic power forms, works through the *normalisation* of ideology by means of shaping people's identities and emotions – the lived sense of selfhood. It constructs ideals and expectations to live up to and installs a form of self-management or self-monitorisation with regards to normalised ideals. As such, subjectification produces the *ideal* employee and makes subjects feel responsible individually to live up to that ideal. Hence, the locus of power is the creation of an ideology that appeals to people's sense of selfhood, and it is expressed tacitly in everyday microprocesses and micro-practices in organisations.

An example. Consider the human resource management practice of conducting appraisal interviews with employees – in Danish known as an employee *development* conversation (*medarbejderudviklingssamtale*; see e.g. Brinkmann, 2014). That the employee is expected to develop herself is implied. It is not a matter of *if* she should develop, but *how* she can. The questions that structure the conversation tend to place the management responsibility firmly on the shoulders of the employee (contrary to the idea of scientific management), who is to exercise self-direction when reflecting upon how well they are doing, what they can do better, how they can improve their weaknesses and where they see themselves in three to five years. Do the power relations in that particular space allow for the employee to state they would rather not continue developing themselves, that they are perfectly fine where they are, doing what they do, or, that they perhaps would prefer to step down from the treadmill for a while to prevent stress and burnout? Obviously, the employee could bring up these issues. The point is that the power dynamics in the space facilitated by the appraisal interview make such response seem illegitimate because continuous development as an ideological value is fully integrated into the practice. To not bring suggestions for personal and professional

development to the table means to not live up to that ideal. It would, in other words, break with the expectations for the appraisal interview to express satisfaction with the status quo. In this way, human resources practices, as Townley (1998) has it, become implicated in strategies of power and knowledge. The appraisal interview becomes a regulatory, and thereby, organising principle. Individuals have to monitor and control themselves by their selves, which become moulded by disciplinary power (Foucault, 1977; Grey, 1994).

2.5.2 Identity

Whereas domination naturalises an extant social order, subjectification *normalises* a particular way of being in that social order. Systemic power, therefore, works through identity regulation and may become a form of organisational control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). To understand this statement, it is necessary to establish what exactly is meant by identity in organisation studies. Notions of identity are traditionally built upon the assumption of a stable self; that is, identity (singular) as something permanent and coherent – that which remains true about you at all times and in all situations and contexts. It resonates well with the idea of the autonomous individual as found in both rational and human relations perspectives. The individual is taken as an essential identity, a core consisting of an inner self holding certain needs and motivations (Townley, 1998). In mapping the theoretical connections between diversity (management) and identity studies, Holck, Muhr, and Villeséche (2016) point to recurrent and yet-to-be settled academic debates, one of which is about whether identity is stable or dynamic. Other contestations revolve around whether identity is chosen by or imposed onto the individual, and if identity is coherent or fragmented. The latter view – identities as fragmented – is championed by post-structuralist organisation studies. Here, the idea of an immutable essence is dissolved into bits and pieces that are constantly

under negotiation in relation to the surroundings. Identities are seen as discursively constructed and dependent on context, meaning the self – identity – is not a separate entity that interacts with the organisation and other separate selves; it is influenced by different social relations and organisational processes.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) state (with reference to Giddens, 1991) that self-identity is the self as reflexively understood by the person. As such, it is not a trait, nor a collection of traits; it is a reflexively organised narrative that grants a degree of existential continuity. And this is of relevance to organisations, which, according to Alvesson and Willmott (2002), regulate identity as a modality of organisational control. One example can be found in Kunda and Van Maanen's (1999) study of how employees internalise (i.e. live and breathe) the values of their organisation. This is what the authors call 'normative control': commitment is ensured through a culture that the employees are identifying with. As the authors say, it is not the job that employees are in love with – it is the company! And in return for their love, their marriage-like commitment, the employees receive a(n) (professional) identity.

Alvesson and Willmott (2002) criticise conceptualisations of organisational control for paying lip service to the meaning, culture and ideology in structural configurations of control. As an example, they highlight Mintzberg's (1980) five coordination mechanisms, which, indeed, focus on impersonal features of control. If we, however, take into consideration Mintzberg's (1980) sixth proposed mechanism, the one that relied exactly on ideology, on indoctrination, I believe that Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) critique is misplaced. When I bring up their study, it is because they couple research on structure and design with studies of cultural symbolism. In their own words, they show 'how organizational control is

accomplished through the self-positioning of employees within managerially inspired discourses about work and organization with which they may become more or less identified and committed' (2002: 620). They make two crucial points here. One is that power is both positive and negative, creative and repressive – something that Townley (1998: 193) has echoed. The other point, which they elaborate on in the quote below, is that identity regulation is a matter of managing the *inside* of employees:

> Our concern is to appreciate how mechanisms and practices of control – rewards, leadership, division of labour, hierarchies, management accounting, etc. – do not work 'outside' the individual's quest(s) for self-definition(s), coherence(s) and meaning(s). Instead, they interact, and indeed are fused, with what we term the 'identity work' of organizational members. Identity work, we contend, is a significant medium and outcome of organizational control. (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 621–622)

Self-identity as a 'repertoire of structured narrations, is sustained through identity work in which regulation is accomplished by selectively, but not necessarily reflectively, adopting practices and discourses that are more or less intentionally targeted at the "insides" of employees, including managers' (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002: 627). So, post-structuralist studies of identity in relation to organisation are a critique of identity understood in narrow terms as, for instance, Taylor's (1911) 'economic man'. In fact, one could argue that Taylorism applied a form of disciplinary power when constructing *norms* and standards, thereby constructing identity and knowledge by 'comparing, differentiating, hierarchizing, homogenizing and excluding' (Collinson, 2003: 528). Subjectivities are shaped by

organisation, meaning that in addition to making products and providing services, organisations also produce people – both symbolically and materially, in conferring meanings and identities. Collinson (2003) observes a number of ways in which employees navigate this organisational reality. One is what he refers to as becoming a 'conformist self' (2003: 536) through attempts at appearing as valued objects in the eyes of others (the organisation), thereby subordinating one's own subjectivity. An example of this is found in Muhr and Kirkegaard's (2013) study of consultants' identity work, which led the authors to conclude the following:

> [T]o sustain their desire for work, consultants fantasise about alternative off-work identities. These fantasies help the consultants maintain an illusion of wholeness, which allows them to direct all their energy toward work. (Muhr & Kirkegaard, 2013: 106)

All consultants are extremely competitive and spend most of their life on work. Yet they also express doubts about their job and spend a lot of time and energy dreaming about different careers and work lives. At first, these fantasies may appear as unproductive nonsense. However, as the authors show, what the consultants are doing is, in effect, making a split between their work-identities and their fantasy-identities of being something more, someone beyond work. They also seem to be quite aware of not having a clear non-work identity. The consultants are driven by two discourses: one of the ideal employee, which is the demand from their workplace organisation; one of work–life balance, the demand from society and family. Since they spend most of their time working long hours, the fantasies become productive in allowing the consultants to imagine themselves as more than work. The dreams, hopes and wishes that the consultants express make them capable

of seeing themselves as authentic, real and whole persons. The fantasies become a way of closing the gap by having the incompatible identity-regulating discourses meet. Paradoxically, the idea of being more than work is exactly what renders them capable of submitting themselves (i.e. subordinating the off-work identity) and being just about work.

Another way of manoeuvring identity regulation, according to Collinson (2003: 538), is to perform a 'dramaturgical self' as a form of impression management. This brings us to emotions and, more specifically, emotional labour. It would be intuitive to assume that a rational model of organisation comes with the exclusion of emotion. I have previously shown how, for example, Weber's (1924) bureaucratic organisation and notion of rational-legal authority both rest on the dehumanisation of organisation and, with that, a disregard for the personal, including emotions (to the extent that we may think of emotions in intrinsic terms). From that perspective, emotions would simply get in the way of organisational efficiency and productivity, thereby rendering the organisation 'irrational'. However, as studies of emotional labour in organisations attest, emotions are an organisational phenomenon in the sense that organisations attempt to either rationalise desirable emotions or regulate through *normalisation* those deemed undesirable.

2.5.3 Emotion

In Hochschild's (1983) writing we see examples of how organisations are looking for personality and not merely formal qualifications, skills and competencies when hiring employees. Her best known example of emotional labour is perhaps that of flight attendants. Emotional labour is the self-management that employees exert in order for their feelings, or the expression of their feelings, to meet the emotional

requirements of an occupation. This may, on a side note, potentially leave employees with emotional dissonance akin to cognitive dissonance (see e.g. Christensen & Muhr, 2019), because the management of appearance takes over what was formerly private territories of the self. Regardless of whether you really feel empathetic towards a passenger (the customer), that is what you are required to convey – and convincingly so. Hochschild (1983: 96) argues that through the process of aligning one's emotional display with the expectations of one's role in the organisation, employees get estranged from their own feelings, as eloquently captured in this quote, which is a recruiter's advice to new candidates: '[T]he secret to getting a job is to imagine the kind of person the company wants to hire and then become that person during the interview. The hell with your theories and of what you believe in, and what your integrity is, and all that other stuff.' But becoming the person that the organisation wants is easier said than done, considering the many and different scenarios that flight attendants have to have an adequate emotional reaction to.

> Recruiters look for someone who is smart but can also cope with being considered dumb, someone who is capable of giving emergency safety comments but can also handle people who can't take orders from a woman, and someone who is naturally empathetic but can also resist the numbing effect of having that empathy engineered and continuously used by a company for its own purposes. (Hochschild, 1983: 98)

The training of accurate emotional display begins already during recruitment with guidelines for how candidates are to behave in accordance with a number of predefined feelings, such as being sincere, unaffected, polite or flirtatious/kind,

depending on the customer. In other words, the flight attendants have to give up control over how the work is to be done, thereby becoming deskilled and devalued (cf. scientific management). The organisation, the airline, makes use of a disciplinary practice in requiring regular weigh-ins (Hochschild, 1983: 102). If the weight standard is exceeded, the flight attendant risks losing their job. Hochschild (1983: 108) finds that companies want 'real' people; not just surface acting (where the employee does not hide the pretence of taking on a role) but deep acting (that covers the pretence because the employee acts *as if*). Deep acting is a matter of doing the emotional labour necessary in order to reduce any dissonance between the organisation's values and goals and the employee's values and feelings. Through deep acting you become organisation-man, much like Kunda's (1992) account of employees calling themselves 'Techies'.

Emotion management is located in the intermediate space between deeply held beliefs and physical appearance. Emotional labour, as Hochschild (1983: 136) writes, poses a challenge to a person's sense of self: 'The issue of estrangement between what a person senses as her "true self" and her inner and outer acting becomes something to work out, to take a position on.' I take from the quote that the flight attendants know how incredibly much they have to smile and how that demand runs counter to how they feel. And yet they are still smiling. Thus, the flight attendants are not, as a Marxist analysis would suggest, victims of false consciousness, in which case the solution would be to enlighten and have them realise how their employer exploits them. They appear to already be well aware of what they are doing and that what they do might do them a disservice. The matter at hand, therefore, seems to be one of *enlightened* false consciousness (Fleming, 2010; Johnsen, Muhr, & Pedersen, 2009; Zizek, 1989). They resort to a cynical mode of reasoning (Sloterdijk, 1988; Sloterdijk, Eldred, & Adelson, 1984), so even

when some develop what Collinson (2003: 539) calls 'resistant selves' and, for example, laugh to let off steam (Hoschchild, 1983: 105), the laughter may prove to have no critical, as in subversive, effect, since the laughter is exactly what allows the flight attendants to distance (disidentify) themselves just enough to continue doing the emotional labour demanded of them by the organisation (Karlsen & Villadsen, 2015). My reason for mentioning this is that identity-based control, including rules for how to feel and how to express feelings as set by management, leads to identity-based resistance. But as Contu (2008) points out, and as seems to be the case with the flight attendants; resistance may in some instances end up reproducing that which it attempts to resist.

Hochschild's (1983) account of the emotional labour done by flight attendants is an example of disciplinary practices for bringing about the 'right' feelings as required by the airline organisations. Indirect supervision (1983: 117) is one such example. It relies on the flight attendants' sense of what passengers will communicate to management that they will, in turn, communicate to the flight attendants. This practice is an ideal candidate for what Grey (1994) calls a Panoptic technique, where Panoptic refers to Foucault's (1977) idea of the Panopticon as an ideal diagram of discipline. In short, the Panopticon is a design for a prison where the prisoners are housed in a circular building with guards stationed in a tower in the centre of the complex, from where they can observe any of the prisoners without the prisoners knowing when or if they are being watched. The prisoners, then, will have to discipline themselves *as if* they were under observation, by adhering to the *norms* and demonstrating good behaviour. In the same fashion, the disciplinary power of indirect supervision trains the flight attendants to examine themselves through (hierarchical) observation and normalising judgment.

The example of flight attendants has served to show the appropriation of emotions that are *wanted* by the organisation. Other studies have shown the practices set in place to regulate *undesirable* emotions in a similar fashion; emotions that are believed to be disruptive of organisational functioning.

> Organisations use various means of regulating socially undesirable emotions, including *normalizing*. We define normalizing as institutionalized processes by which extraordinary situations are rendered seemingly ordinary. […] By 'institutionalized', we mean processes that are embedded in the organisation's structure and culture such that they exist independently of any given person. Thus, we focus on mechanisms that appear to be shared by group or organisational members. (Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002: 215–217, my emphasis)

The process of normalisation will render the out-of-the-ordinary more *normal* and, therefore, less likely to stir up feelings that are unwanted from the perspective of the organisation. Through self-policing and emotional conduct, employees may arrive at an emotional display that is consistent with their professional identities (Coupland, Brown, Daniels, & Humphreys, 2008). And it is important to note that power as normalisation 'does not work by *violence* upon the body but rather by observing, examining a body and leading it to become more efficient' (May, 2006: 83, emphasis in original; see also Deetz, 1998). The development of appropriate emotional displays has consequences relationally and structurally as well as institutionally, and the move from a research focus on intentions (i.e. the motivations behind power, such as ensuring productivity or freedom) to the *how* of power has allowed for investigations of its effects – including those that are

unintended. Ashcraft (2007, 2013), for example, has shown that it is not only people who get a sense of identity from their work; occupations also derive identity from the groups of people that they are normally associated with. Think of the gender-segregated labour market with male- and female-dominated workplaces – reinstating identity, power (and emotion) as central organisational phenomena.

In reviewing the literature on power, identity and emotion in organisation studies, I have utilised Fleming and Spicer's (2014) framework as a heuristic for explaining dissimilar conceptualisations of power as either possessive or relational. I used the latter conception to dwell on the notions of identity and emotion in organisational contexts, providing examples along the way to show a movement in organisational control from exerting power over the *outside* – that is, competencies, skills and qualifications of the worker who was allowed, even expected (cf. Weber, 1924) to maintain a split between the private and professional roles – to power being realised through (not over) the *inside* of employees – that is, the self, the individual employee's notion of self as reflexively understood. This movement has also changed meanings of identity, which traditionally has been understood as an inner core that is stable – an essence – to an understanding of identities (plural) in flux and only momentarily stable, since they are constantly contested and depend on, although not determined by, the discursive and social identities available. Tracy and Trethewey (2005) summarise this strongly – and beautifully – using the metaphor of self as crystalised.

> Certainly crystals may feel solid, stable, and fixed, but just as crystals have differing forms depending upon whether they grow rapidly or slowly, under constant or fluctuating conditions, or from highly variable

or remarkably uniform fluids or gasses, crystalized selves have different shapes depending on the various discourses through which they are constructed and constrained. (Tracy & Trethewey, 2005: 186)

The organisation is, in this regard, but one place from which discourses are produced. Consequently, individuals are *not* seen as unitary, coherent or autonomous. They are *not* separate entities, *nor* are they separable from social relations and organisational processes. Ultimately, this part of the review has brought us to more contemporary debates in the research field of organisation about co-optation of the so-called whole person; that is, a form of neo-normative control where employees are expected *not* to internalise the organisational culture (normative control) but to *externalise* themselves to the organisation. '*Neo-normative control* entails exhortation to "be yourself"' (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009: 571, emphasis in original; see also Endrissat, Islam, & Noppeney, 2015), and it reveals an organisational interest in employees' authentic feelings.

Prior to the interest in the complete person, feelings were protected from the organisation either through a private/professional split of identities or the possibility for cynical distancing to organisational control. With neo-normative control, however, organisations may harness feelings as a resource that can be exploited just like regular labour to enhance output. This development has led some scholars to talk of a personality market rather than a labour market (Hanlon, 2016), since organisations are interested in hiring the private self as much as the professional – an extended Marxist critique (Marx, 1970) given that it is not just the labour of the worker that is appropriated by the organisation; the worker is too. The organisation consumes labour *and* personality. The point of my review is not that identity

regulation in organisations is bad per se, but that it has consequences for employees' self-understanding and potential (Maravelias, 2007). And herein lies the difference between normative and neo-normative control; normative control seeks control through employees' conformity to the organisation's culture and values. Conversely, neo-normative control operates through employees' *diversity*, through the valuation of *difference*, of every single employee's expression of self.

2.6 FROM ORGANISATION AS AN ENTITY OF BEING TO ORGANISING AS A PROCESS OF BECOMING

So far, I have shown how organisation studies have evolved historically since the early 1900s when organisations were absent as objects of study in themselves (Scott, 2004) and were approached as rational and closed systems (e.g. Fayol, 1916; Taylor, 1911; Weber, 1924). That approach was soon criticised from a human relations perspective of organisations as social systems (e.g. Homans, 1941; Johnson & Gill, 1993; McGregor, 1966). Both views, however, were on organisation as a noun – that is, entities in a state of being determined by the boundaries of their physical parameters (e.g. a building within which work, and studies thereof, was conducted). Later on, organisation scholars began to take an interest in the environment of organisations (e.g. DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967), including the impact of environmental factors in determining the structure and functioning of organisations, which as a result were now viewed as open systems. Theories of formal structures of organisations (e.g. Mintzberg, 1980, 1983) were supplemented with theories of more informal organisational processes, such as culture (e.g. Kunda, 1992; Kunda & Van Maanen, 1999; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Schein, 2004). Consequently, the concept of organisation expanded and took on new meanings that allowed for a process view (e.g. Hernes, 2014); that is, organisation as a process of becoming, a verb, the very act of organis*ing*. With

this shift, a plethora of organisational phenomena rendered themselves available for the field of organisation studies, including issues of power (e.g. Fleming & Spicer, 2014; Townley, 1998) and identity (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Collinson, 2003; Grey, 1994), which both came in *natural* continuation of research on organisational culture that had been found to come to function as a form of organisational control – a managerial instrument – that could regulate identity work (e.g. through emotional labour) (e.g. Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002; Coupland et al., 2008; Hochschild, 1983). This turn to identity allowed not only the critical scrutiny of resistance to power in organisations, but also – as I will continue to show – the study of organisational diversity.

Having explicated some of the changes that organisation studies have undergone, I want to stress that my review of the literature should not be read linearly as a historical progression where one perspective or approach replaces another, thereby implying that some perspectives and approaches are no longer applicable or in use. I have *not* shown the scientific revolution (Kuhn, 1962) of organisation studies where the adoption of new frameworks will cause the disappearance of previous frameworks. The *paradigmatic* shifts presented have granted us insights into different organisational phenomena as the field of organisation studies became broader and still more interdisciplinary. Thus, notions of rationality and functionality, which can be traced to the infancy of organisation studies, are still in use in contemporary organisation – not least in the literature on organisational practices for managing diversity. Viewing organisations as systems that are closed or open and rational or natural has been heuristic in presenting my reading of some of the main movements in the organisation studies literature. For the remainder of the review, turning to organisation as process, I find it useful to bring up Hatch's (2012: 30) matrix that disseminates the ideas of organisation-as-entity and

organisation-as-process, respectively. Further, the matrix distinguishes between the concept of organisation at an abstract level vis-à-vis organisation and organising in concrete terms.

Weick (1979) was an early advocate for adopting a process view of organising; that is, a relational (contrary to an entity) approach to organisation that emphasises process over structure, becoming over being. Rather than taking for granted the existence of a given organisation, the task at hand becomes one of exploring how that state of organisation is continuously obtained. Organisational structure exists because it is produced through *repeated* organisational processes, and meaning emerges from the ongoing narrative accounts that organisational actors keep telling themselves, thereby inscribing their identities. Organisation (the verb) produces organisations (the noun) in plural: 'Organizing is everywhere, and it varies according to degrees of formalization, visibility, stability and so on. It is a general verb which includes many specific processes, and a noun which covers multitudes of instances' (Parker, 2018: 112). The CCO perspective – communication as constitutive *of* organisation (see e.g. Cooren, Kuhn, Cornelissen, & Clark, 2011; Schoeneborn, Kuhn, & Kärreman, 2019; Schoeneborn, Vásquez, & Cornelissen, 2016) – is a good example of a process-based view of organisation. The organisation is constituted by communication, meaning organisations are not thought of as containers for the transmission of communication. As Cooren et al. (2011) note, it is not just organisations understood as collective actors that are talked into existence, communication is also constitutive of organising – the 'ongoing efforts at coordination and control of activity and knowledge' (1149; see also Ashcraft, Kuhn, & Cooren, 2009).

I mention CCO as an example of what it entails to think of organisation in process terms, but I do *not* imply that organisation can be reduced to communication alone. Here I agree with Hernes (2014) in that a process view of organisation should *not* be mistaken for a theory or a model. Rather, it is a *disposition* that prompts us to think of organisation differently.

> Conventional views in organization studies are susceptible to giving precedence to the environment over the organization, and precedence of organization over actions. (Hernes, 2014: 13)

But as we just learned from Parker (2018), it is action (the activity of organising) that makes organisation(s), meaning organisations are not given but emerge temporarily from processes of action. To sketch some of the differences between structure theory (e.g. Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Mintzberg, 1980, 1983) and process theory of organisation, we may say that the former – perhaps not surprisingly – focuses on structure, the environment, which is both given and dominant, and boundaries, which are considered stable. This stability is interspersed with change, meaning organisations are taken as remaining largely the same until some external event prompts change, to which the organisation will adapt with the purpose of regaining stability. A process view, in comparison, focuses on processes (again, hardly surprising), the environment is considered multiple, enacted, defined and redefined, boundaries are shifting and constantly open to renegotiation, and everything around the organisation is changing, prompting the organisation to work from a sense of continuity (Hernes, 2014).

Based on this, we may conclude that there are also some similarities between the two approaches; for example, when it comes to integration of differing functions and units, and the importance of the external environment. However, a process view of organisation is critical of, among other things, what Hernes (2014: 26) labels circumscription and proximity assumptions; for example, the tendency to treat a function as an isolated unit. Every unit is a set of relations that transgress that unit's boundaries. Roskilde Festival (see article four) is a case in point. The division that I was (and still am) part of consists of a number of employed staff as well as a number of volunteers. The latter group exceeds the former in numbers by far, yet most volunteers are only part of the division when the actual festival takes place, immediately up to or after the event. And two-thirds of the volunteers are procured through partner organisations. In other words, the boundaries of my Roskilde Festival division are blurred, expanding and contracting over time to include or exclude volunteers and partner organisations when relevant.

Another, and related, assumption in organisation theory, that a process view is critical of, is how periods of relative stability are interrupted by change. This leaves the ongoing acts of stabilising and changing unaccounted for (Hernes, 2014: 29). This critique, therefore, is similar to that of Meyerson and Martin (1987) within organisational culture. I am not trying to make the point that a process view is in any way superior to structure theory. Rather, my point is – as has been the case throughout this entire literature review – that organisation studies is a research field constantly on the move, adding new perspectives, models and theories, each with their own assumptions and limitations about that (organisation), which they are supposed to describe, but also with the possibilities for capturing and creating still more aspects of organisation.

Management is one such aspect and, according to Parker (2018), but one of many forms that organisation can take. That is, management is one particular way of organising. This view of organisation, however, is diametrically opposed to early organisation studies. For example, Fayol (1916) believed that the practice of management was distinct from other organisational functions; in other words, that management is separate from and, hence, not to be conceived of as a form of organisation. According to him, management performs the following four functions: 1) planning (defining goals, establishing strategies to achieve goals, developing plans to integrate and coordinate activities); 2) organising (arranging and structuring work to accomplish organisational goals); 3) leading (working with and through people to accomplish goals); and 4) controlling (monitoring, comparing and correcting work).

Parker (2018: 106), on the other side, would argue that there is no distinctiveness to management and that any definition of management is tautological: managers manage. And this definition contains no reference to practices, which are different to things that other people do. This leads us to a realisation that organisation takes place everywhere when people (including but not limited to managers) and things come together to do stuff, and it can not, therefore, be reduced to the practices and activities of management. And wherever people and things come together, they are also *put* together. This turns organisation into a political and ethical matter, because 'organization is the solidification of choices, politics made into routines' (Parker, 2018: 144). Ideas about organisation 'embed assumptions about the relationship between human beings and things – they are *politics* made durable' (2018: 120, my emphasis). As I jump to the seventh and final subsection of this literature review to inscribe diversity as part of organisation studies, it is important to keep this in mind: the issue of significance is not particular models of organisation and choices

between them, but a recognition of the political and ethical in organising (for) diversity.

2.7 DIVERSITY AND (ITS) ORGANISATION

Where the preceding subsections of the review have provided answers to what can be understood by organisation, organisations and organising, this last part of the chapter will give answers to the question of how diversity is understood organisationally. In reviewing current practices for organising and researching diversity, including criticisms thereof, I lay a foundation on which to build and present the concept of norm critique as a contribution of interest to the field of diversity research in organisation and management studies. What makes norm critique interesting is not how it fills in some gap in the literature. That it certainly does, for instance, in putting critical theory into practice (as called for by some scholars) by offering reflection exercises for intervesion (see article two for an example hereof). What makes norm critique an interesting contribution is how it *denies certain assumptions* in the literature (Davis, 1971). I begin with the gendered organisation – that is, how gender structures organisation – and by referring to Kanter, whose book already in 1977, when it was first published, showcased many of the issues that are discussed in contemporary studies of organisational diversity.

2.7.1 Gendered organisation

Early studies of diversity in organisation, such as Kanter's (1977) book *Men and Women of the Corporation* (the one mentioned by institutional theorists DiMaggio and Powell earlier in my literature review), established diversity as an organisational phenomenon. Kanter's analytical focus was on gender diversity; she showed how

organisations are gendered, that gender is embedded as a substructure of organisation. By substructure, I am not implying subordination to other structures in organisations, merely that gender is but one among other structures. Besides being gendered, organisations are, for example, also found to be classed, raced and sexed (Ahonen, Tienari, Meriläinen, & Pullen, 2013). The title of Kanter's (1977) book hints at a possessive relationship between people and organisation. With a structural view of organisation, we may be able to discern men and women in an organisation. However, it is from a process view that we can observe their relations; that is, how they become men and women of the organisation, as Kanter claimed (1977). The book puts forward the argument that it is the job and, hence, organisational structure that shapes the person through experiences at work. The attitudes of organisational members depend on the opportunities offered as well as the power distributed by the organisation. With limited opportunities, people tend to lower their productivity, and the situation turns into a self-fulfilling prophecy. People high in power use it to influence others and are very confident in doing so, whereas people with less power have lower self-esteem and amplify what little power they actually have. Power, understood this way, works episodically (cf. Fleming & Spicer, 2014), but Kanter (1977) also displayed a relational understanding of power.

In creating the concept of *tokenism*, Kanter (1977: 209) was able to elucidate more systemic power dynamics in relation to group compositions where the minority, in this case women, accounts for 20 per cent or less, in which case she denoted them as tokens. She showed the mechanisms of proportional representation of social categories in organisation through what she called the law of increasing returns: '[A]s individuals of their type (tokens) represent a *smaller* numerical proportion of the overall group, they each potentially capture a larger share of the awareness given

to that group' (1977: 210, emphasis in original). The obvious visibility of tokens, given their few numbers, which make them stand out from the *majority-norm*, leads to performance pressure. These performance pressures are a double-edged sword, because tokens are turned into representatives of their group: 'The few of another type in a skewed group can appropriately be called "tokens", for, like the Indsco [pseudonym for the case organisation Kanter studied] exempt women, they are often treated as representatives of their category, as symbols rather than individuals' (1977: 208). Whenever a contrast – a token – is present in a majority group, the culture of that group is exaggerated rather than undermined. And if not assimilating, then the token is stereotyped; for instance, by being assigned 'the woman's slot' – a position deemed suitable for the stereotypical prescribed roles of women. Kanter (1977) observed a number of interruptions that women in the organisation faced due to their status as tokens and which reminded them of their difference. An example is when a group of men asked a token-woman for permission to chat about girls. However, another reaction to token-presence would be to isolate women informally, which would be the case if the group of men decided to chat about girls at times when the token-woman is excluded from the conversation.

> Those women who were few in number among male peers and often had 'only woman' status became tokens: symbols of how-women-can-do, stand-ins for all women. Sometimes they had the advantages of those who are 'different' and thus were highly visible in a system where success is tied to becoming known. Sometimes they faced the loneliness of the outsider, of the stranger who intrudes upon an alien culture and may become self-estranged in the process of assimilation. (Kanter, 1977: 207)

Kanter's (1977) study is old but definitely not dated. The test of time has proven that it is not obsolete either; studies of contemporary organisation report findings that substantiate her insights. For example, more recent and replicated studies applying role congruity theory demonstrate the existence of a perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership (e.g. Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell & Butterfield, 2013). These studies reveal how women are often ascribed with welfare attributes, such as being affectionate, helpful, kind and sympathetic, unlike men who, conversely, are characterised as assertive and controlling in addition to being endowed with properties like aggressive, ambitious, dominant, independent, confident, etc. The potential prejudice against female leaders that the studies find, therefore, is explained with dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women, and similar beliefs about leaders and men, given that the features associated with leadership are congruent with those associated with men. The role incongruence between women and leadership, on the other hand, may lead to women being evaluated less favourably, even if enacting the leader role with the prescribed behaviour. While the example with role congruity theory focuses on gender diversity specifically, the insights that Kanter's (1977) study provided seem to hold true more broadly to other diversity categories, since the decisive factor is proportionality in representation – or lack thereof.

> Any situation where proportions of significant types of people are highly skewed can produce similar themes and processes. It was rarity and scarcity, rather than femaleness *per se*, that shaped the environment for women in the parts of Indsco mostly populated by men. (Kanter, 1977: 207, emphasis in original)

In revisiting some of the early works on gender diversity and organisation, including that of Kanter (1977), Acker (2012: 215) notes that organising processes are generative of gendered substructures, which are '[(re)]created in the organizing processes in which inequalities are built into job design, wage determination, distribution of decision-making and supervisory power, the physical design of the work place, and rules, both explicit and implicit, for behaviour at work'. She goes on to explain how the gendered substructure is also produced and maintained by the collective beliefs about gender differences and (in)equality that inform organisational culture, as well as the gendered identities and interactions. Put differently, diversity is shaping and also itself gets shaped by both formal and informal organisational workings. According to Holck (2018), diversity is *embedded* in organisational structure. Taking inspiration from a classic text on organisational structure, namely that of Lawrence and Lorsch (1967), Holck (2018) argues that organisational structures are emergent and contingent upon the balancing acts between differentiation and integration. To her, the accelerating differentiation that a diverse workforce presents will call for requisite integration as a mechanism to manage the organisational diversity.

Acker (2006) adds that the gendered inequalities that Kanter (1977) reported on in one particular organisation are in fact part of *any* organisation. 'All organizations have inequality regimes', as Acker (2006: 443) writes, 'defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organisations'. Inequality is defined as power asymmetries that result in disparate levels of discretion between organisational members over goals, resources and outcomes. With a nod to Fleming and Spicer (2014), we may interpose that the (re)arrangements of relations between people and the distribution of resources or goods that happen through the

mobilisation of power are expressions of organisational politics. As such, inequality in organisation is related to everything from how work is organised and opportunities for promotion and interesting work to security in employment and benefits, pay and other monetary rewards, respect and pleasures in work and work relations – thereby pointing to both basic and higher-order needs (cf. Maslow, 1943) and what the diversity literature acknowledges as a need not only for redistribution of power and resources (broadly understood), but also for recognition (e.g. Fraser, 1995; Young, 1997). To Acker (2006), diversity understood as difference is the 'base' (or 'part', using the terminology of Mintzberg, 1983) of inequality in organisation.

A concrete example is homosexuality – or what I prefer to signify as non-heterosexuality (to put emphasis on the norm and it epistemologically negates homosexuality), the reflection value against which homosexuality derives its meaning as the 'ghost' of heterosexuality (Søndergaard, 2006: 108). Non-heterosexuality disrupts organising processes because it flouts the assumptions of heterosexuality. In deviating from the organisational norm, non-heterosexuality disturbs an otherwise well-oiled machinery and, thereby, the smoothness of organisational functioning. After all, the organising utility of norms lies with them operating off the fact that we do not have to think about them – something that I also point to in my third article. The point is that the organising practices and processes of organisation produce inequality regimes in organisations. So, diversity or difference, which to Acker (2006) is the base of organisational inequality, is a by-product of people and things coming together to organise stuff (cf. Parker's (2018) basic definition of organisation). By 'by-product' I mean to say that it is an unintended outcome of organisation (assuming that no one wants to organise for the purpose of creating inequality), but an outcome, nonetheless. Of course, sometimes

inequality is purposefully designed as part of the organisation – and fully legitimate. Weber's (1924) bureaucracy is a good example of this, albeit only if the authority of some can be defended with their superior technical knowledge and skills. Such a defence is difficult to uphold if the inequality turns out to be gendered; that is, if, for instance, women's exclusion from positions of power and control can be shown to be systematic and linked to unconscious biases that implicitly favour men and disadvantage women (see e.g. Christensen & Muhr, 2019). The same goes if the inequality is raced or classed or founded on any other diversity category. This brings me to the diversity term itself.

2.7.2 Diversity – an organisation device for identity categories

In the literature, diversity is widely used as an umbrella term for a broad number of socio-demographic identity categories. Not presuming to present an exhaustive list, these categories include (dis)ability (e.g. Dobusch, 2017; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005), class (e.g. Acker, 2006; Romani, Holck, & Risberg, 2019), culture (e.g. Barinaga, 2007; Ely & Thomas, 2001) ethnicity (e.g. Holck, 2018; Holck & Muhr, 2017; Noon, 2007), gender (e.g. Christensen & Muhr, 2019; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005), language (e.g. Sliwa & Johansson, 2014), professional background (e.g. Shemla & Wegge, 2019), race (e.g. Acker, 2006; Ely, Padavic, & Thomas, 2012), religion (e.g. Gebert et al., 2014) and sexuality (e.g. Acker, 2006; Rumens & Kerfoot, 2009), as well as the intersectionality of these categories (e.g. Dennissen, Benschop, & Van den Brink, 2018; Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher, & Nkomo, 2016). I mention intersectionality because among recent developments in literature on organisational diversity is a call for examining how two or more of the aforementioned categories intersect or overlap, thereby potentially creating effects that cannot be accounted for if addressing each category in isolation – something I also discuss in my second article. Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, and Nkomo bring to our attention that

'comparisons are not made *between* groups, but by taking white, heterosexual, western, middle/upper class, abled men as the term of reference, and measuring other groups' difference from this *norm*' (2010: 13, my emphasis). Perhaps a bit provocative to some, we may condense the quote and say that diversity is difference as seen through the eyes of he who fits various organisational norms for race, sexuality, nationality, class, gender and other categories. The point is that diversity becomes a study of the other and diversity management, the study of otherness as seen through the eyes of the privileged (Case, Iuzzini, & Hopkins, 2012).
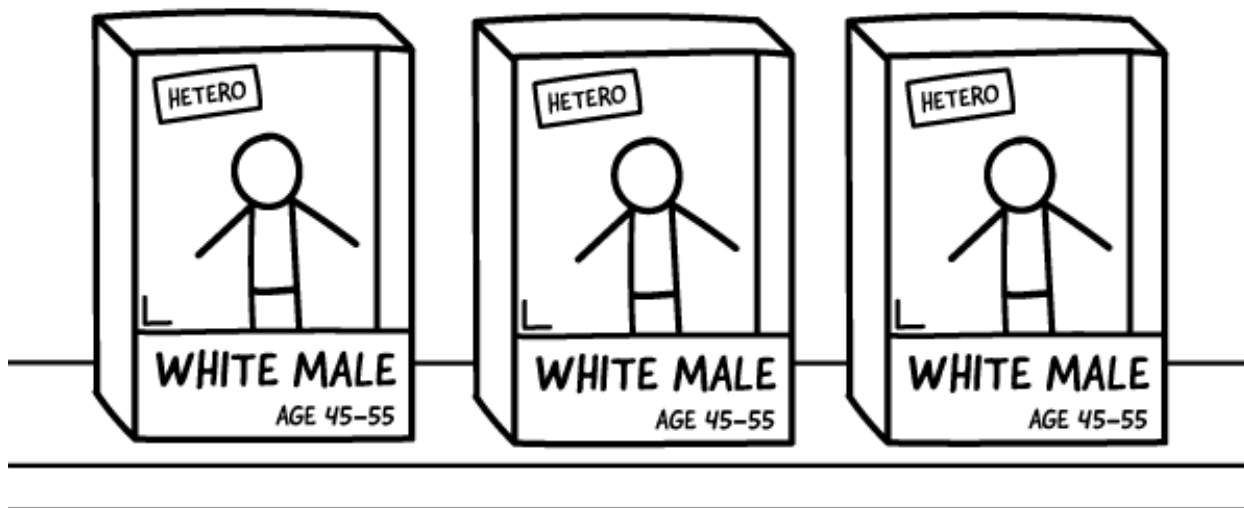
Figure 3: The norm. A term of reference against which difference is measured.

Listing these categories is symptomatic for much thinking in diversity studies, which, as a field, tends to rely on social identity theory (Holck et al., 2016). Janssens and Zanoni (2005), therefore, suggest reconceptualising diversity as an organisational product. As the authors state, diversity researchers and practitioners alike have depended on a priori diversity categories based on socio-demographic characteristics, such as gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, etc. With the

reconceptualisation offered by Janssens and Zanoni (2005: 312), it becomes apparent that any difference with reference to social identity categories becomes relevant 'in a specific productive context' and 'only in so far they either contribute to or hamper the organisation of work and the attainment of organizational goals'. It is only the differences that appear to either add value or not that become salient and are constructed by management as diversity. What is constituted as diversity is, as a consequence, extremely limited. For example, Jackson, Joshi, and Erhardt (2003), in their review of research on diversity at team and organisational levels, found that 89 per cent of diversity effects reported were related to overt differences such as sex, race/ethnicity and age, which as attributes were used as proxies for assumed underlying, deeper traits because these visible categories, allegedly, are easy for managers to operationalise. And in a more recent review, Jonsen, Maznevski, and Schneider (2011) add that nearly 90 per cent of authors to research diversity are from the US, Canada, Australia and the UK, suggesting a potential bias in knowledge production. Ironically, diversity literature is itself not very diverse.

2.7.3 The business case for managing organisational diversity

The reliance on social categories is particularly prevalent in the practice and research field of diversity management. It entered Danish public discourse at the beginning of the new millennium when the national newspaper *Berlingske* published an article proclaiming diversity as the driver for future success in business.[4] This proclamation that, if managed well, diversity in organisations can

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[4] According to a search on the Danish term for diversity management – *mangfoldighedsledelse* – in the Danish media database *Infomedia*.

lead to improved business performance is also well known in research on diversity management (Qin, Muenjohn, & Chhetri, 2014; Williams & Mavin, 2014). For example, Cox and Blake (1991) propose six specific business-related reasons for valuing diversity in organisations. Two of the reasons are that effective management of diversity reduces costs and further benefits organisations when it comes to resource acquisition – especially in bottleneck labour market conditions where the supply of qualified candidates does not meet demand. Simply put, it is anticipated that employees who are cast as diverse will also actively seek out and choose workplace organisations that explicitly value diversity over ones that do not. The remaining reasons are related to advantage gains in marketing, creativity, problem-solving and system flexibility. All six cases for diversity share a business imperative as a common denominator, since diversity is considered an untapped resource for competitiveness. In short, the plurality of perspectives that successful diversity management would provide to organisations was believed to ensure organisational flexibility in many regards, which was deemed important in changing times of relative uncertainty with regards to organisations' environments (Zanoni et al., 2010) Yet, the notion of diversity management was still fairly new to a Danish context and had to, as Boxenbaum (2006) shows, be translated from the US corporate context in which it was conceived – not least because Danish organisations had worked with diversity from a universal welfare logic with a view of equality as sameness and solidarity through corporate social responsibility (Holck & Muhr, 2017). The concept of diversity management, in contrast, emphasised individual differences as well as differences between certain socio-demographic groups (with a tendency for assuming sameness within those groups) and situated diversity as a human resource management practice (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). Diversity management with its emphasis on difference basically contested national and local interpretations of equity and equality (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010).

Diversity became crucial to business in connection with the publication of the *Workforce 2000* report from the Hudson Institute (Johnston & Packer, 1987; see also Zanoni et al., 2010). Published in 1987, the report forecasted that 85% of *net new entrants* to the American labour market would be women and other minorities. According to Bell (2012: 9–12), the report caused a stir – mostly because of a misunderstanding of terminology. The forecast was read as if men would only make up 15% of the total workforce in the US by the year 2000. Net new entrants, however, refers to the difference between those who become part of the workforce – in the case of the USA, an increasing number is women and other minorities – and those who leave the labour market. In a follow-up report a decade later, the Hudson Institute (Judy & D'Amico, 1997) projected that white men and women would still make up two-thirds of the US workforce in 2020. But the misunderstanding had already seen companies take action and seriously consider how to adapt to this new reality in terms of how to make room for diversity among employees. As such, the action was a *re*action to a perceived external threat to organisational stability and cohesion – hence the need for management in order to control for and regulate the perceived threat and turn it into a business opportunity instead. So, unlike previous initiatives, such as affirmative action and equal opportunity, which quite blatantly sought to combat discrimination of marginalised groups and even promote more equitable outcomes in organisations (e.g. Christensen & Muhr, 2019; Noon, 2010), the invention of diversity management was first and foremost an organisational defence mechanism for perceived demographic changes in the labour market. In other words, diversity management was not so much a voluntary and welcoming embrace of employee diversity as it was a reaction and necessary adaptation to the environment.

That diversity management was a reaction to demographic developments in the labour market – that is, the anticipation of various minority groups and women making up an increasing number of net new entrants – is generally acknowledged among diversity scholars. So is the statement that diversity management has its origins in the US (Bleijenbergh, Peters, & Poutsma, 2010; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). For example, Janssens and Zanoni (2005: 313) mention that diversity studies was established as an independent research field in the 1990s 'following practitioners' growing interest in how to "manage" an increasingly diverse demographic workforce' (see also Nkomo & Cox, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). Importantly – and in line with my reading of diversity as an organisational phenomenon, Janssens and Zanoni (2005) explicate how diversity studies' managerial roots caused early research to be preoccupied with the effects of diversity on organisational outcomes. Basically, this preoccupation with diversity's impact on organisational processes – for example, at team level, where heterogeneous teams are assumed to lead to greater innovation in problem-solving compared to teams that are homogenous (Barinaga, 2007; Ely et al., 2012; Mayo, Kakarika, Mainemelis, & Deuschel, 2016) – was a matter of figuring out whether diversity pays off; an economic rationale that seeks to provide evidence for a business case in valuing diversity. The privileging of diversity management and the associated business case for diversity has displaced other perspectives, such as the focus on equal opportunities. This means that other ways of organising diversity have become marginalised (Noon, 2007). Indeed, the heavy focus on (groups of) people with identities that are disadvantaged in organisation has caused privileged identities (and norms) to be largely overlooked in studies of organisational diversity (McIntosh, 2012). Diversity discourse is mainly aimed at managers for them to take ownership. That, however, also means that the meaning of diversity is derived from a managerial agenda and not owned by ordinary employees (Noon, 2007). The problem with the business case that emerges from this agenda is its reliance on

rational cost-benefit analyses. But what if diversity is not found to pay off: should organisations then stop pursuing it?

2.7.4 Organising diversity for social justice

It is worth noticing that a business case does not necessarily have to exclude a social justice perspective. After all, in as far as there exists a business case for diversity, it will simultaneously be a case against discrimination, the reason being that diversity cannot possibly contribute positively to the organisation if oppressed by the organisation. But a strong business orientation means that rather than resisting diversity, organisations are to appreciate the value-in-diversity through human resource management practices as well as changes to organisational culture (Thomas & Ely, 1996). The business case approach, so intricately interlinked and interlocked with the notion of diversity management, primarily privileges top management and policymakers, and rarely the employees that become the target of diversity practices and, hence, have these imposed on them – giving birth to resistance (Tran, Garcia-Prieto, & Schneider, 2011). Diversity discourse is, if taken at face value, one of both anti-discrimination and emancipation. In practice, however, the discourse of diversity does have constraining and not just liberating effects. As Christiansen and Just succinctly explain:

> Management implies control and regulation, and the concern is that it will delimit diversity rather than set it free. Diversity, viewed through the lens of management, is far from the open space for realisation of difference that the term seemingly implies. The managerial perspective also implies that a business case must be made for diversity, and this does not always sit well with ideals of social justice. (2012: 401)

A preoccupation with the business case among researchers and practitioners alike has resulted in literature on diversity management largely overlooking organsiations other than for-profit companies – or what we may call conventional work organisations. To a project such as mine, which takes an interest in non-profit and volunteer-driven organisations, whose aim is not to profit directly from diversity but to promote diversity for reasons other than potential monetary gains, the tensions between the business case and social justice approaches to organisational diversity are of particular relevance. Studying diversity in the third – voluntary – sector, whose business is social justice, Tomlinson and Schwabenland (2010) note that the two approaches need not necessarily be mutually exclusive (see also Rhodes, 2017). Justifying diversity by means of presenting a business case for the economic return on its effective management is nevertheless to inscribe diversity to a neoliberal discourse, according to which the achievement of equality and social justice is not deemed legitimate as ends in themselves, since the business of business is business, or, as Friedman (2001) has it, the only social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.

A business case for diversity is, however, not the only reason why organisations have implemented diversity management practices. Diversity management can also be observed as an organisational response to isomorphic processes, more precisely the mixed pressure of what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call normative and mimetic isomorphism, where the former triggers the latter. For example, Prasad, Prasad, and Mir (2010) find that it is a discourse of fashion surrounding diversity in an institutional field of consultants and experts that prompts some organisations to implement diversity management initiatives. Meanwhile, other organisations will

imitate and do the same with no regard to how meaningless the initiatives may be in the local context.

Academic interests in diversity management were, at first, aligned with the value-in-diversity perspective provided by the business case. Research was directed at the effects of diversity on organisational performance, with the overall thesis being that diversity management would allow for organisations to do well while doing good. Organisations were believed to be able to better their businesses as well as the equity in outcomes associated with a diverse workforce *if* they implemented and practiced socially responsible management (Syed & Kramar, 2009). That led Dennissen et al. (2018) to call attention to the fact that the effects of diversity management are under-studied, except for the numerical representation of marginalised groups, which tends to be a key performance indicator. Diversity management has come to refer to 'specific programmes, policies and practices that organizations have developed and implemented to manage a diverse workforce effectively and to promote organizational equality' (Dennissen et al., 2018: 2), and the assumption is that one size fits all. In this way, diversity management is practiced in a similar fashion across different organisational contexts and, thus, typically takes the form of mentoring programmes, diversity sensitivity or awareness training and employee networks. And as diversity management has developed into a strategic approach to human resources (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003), it would seem that the organisation becomes the main beneficiary; management the subject and diversity its object. If diversity management is an example of organisational response to normative and mimetic isomorphic pressures, it is, at once, what emerges in the absence of coercive isomorphism. That is, diversity management is, as Jonsen, Tatli, Özbilgin, and Bell (2013) point out, an example of corporate voluntarism based on the business case for diversity, which maintains a rational model view of organisation within which

diversity is only valuable in so far as it is perceived as contributing directly to desirable organisational outcomes and so long as diversity is predictable and controllable. Yet, from an open system perspective to diversity, one could argue – as Jonsen et al. (2013) do – that organisations need to acknowledge that they operate in and are part of a wider community; that they do business in societies and, therefore, have to recognise their societal role.

2.7.5 The performativity of organising diversity

Critical scholars have for several decades pointed out how diversity management often falls short in terms of bringing about that which it names: diversity. This is what Ahmed (2019: 153) would call *nonperformativity*. And yet, one repeated criticism of diversity management is that it produces a particular way of knowing diversity according to the a priori socio-demographic group characteristics applied for measuring the effects and success of diversity initiatives. The failure in diversity management to increase, let alone sustain, organisational diversity lies with the discipline of management, which, as we know from Taylor (1911), tends to generalise what it tries to manage by way of standardising, systematising and institutionalising – in this case, diversity, which becomes yet another object of management. In the process, the organisation makes new room for optimisation and rationalisation. Diversity management, in other words, is the art of engineering where the diversity manager is in full control of her environment. Diversity management is a tool. Diversity management appears to be self-contradictory – presenting a textbook example of the dilemma of collective action – since employees are managed collectively while their individual differences and freedoms are celebrated as diversity.

Another criticism is concerned with a sameness/difference dilemma (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). This concern revolves around the organisational processes by which diversity becomes marginalised as being inherently different from organisational norms, or assimilated, in which case difference is erased because people are expected to become the same as organisational norms. From an organisation theoretical point of view, this sameness/difference dilemma teaches us how differences are organised according to the dualism of diversity and inclusion. If only diversifying, the organisational process results in marginalisation, or what Shore et al. (2011) call differentiation where diversity is not properly integrated. If inclusion takes over with little or no respect for unique differences, for diversity, it easily turns into assimilation instead. A related ethical dilemma touches upon external communication about an organisation's low level of diversity. As Windscheid, Bowes-Sperry, Jonsen, and Morner (2018) explain, the dilemma is whether to truthfully communicate the lack of diversity, cover it up or exaggerate it. For example, in order to attract more women, an organisation may choose not to be truthful in their external communication about the current state of affairs. That would, however, be detrimental to the moral legitimacy of the organisation. If truthful, the organisation fails to signal that they are a workplace with room for diversity (because they currently are not), and that comes with the implication that candidates who could contribute to the overall diversity of the organisation might refrain from joining it because they cannot see themselves represented in the organisation's auto-communication – a vicious circle of self-fulfilment.

Diversity management is also criticised for individualising difference, adopting an everybody-is-different approach that takes out the politics of diversity because it equates systemic inequalities related to, for example, gender, sexuality and ethnicity with more trivial differences. Jonsen et al. critically point to how the

individualisation of difference is the main building block of diversity management and how said individualisation has discursively replaced 'the more collectivist approaches of equal opportunity and affirmative action in the post-1980s' (2013: 276). This dilemma is also expressed in discussions around the level at which to analyse and intervene in organisational diversity: should focus be on individual differences or social group characteristics (Christiansen & Just, 2012)? At the individual level, we may lose sight of structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that may bar some social groups from entering organisations and participating on equal terms with everyone else. In other words, and citing Jonsen et al. (2013: 277), difference as an individual construct 'engenders blindness towards the historical and social dynamics that constructed difference in the first place'. Focusing on social group characteristics, however, comes with its own disadvantage. The risk is an essentialist stance to diversity management where differences are reduced to predefined categories. For example, Zanoni, Thoelen, & Ybema (2017) criticise how minority ethnic creatives in the cultural industry are assumed to automatically bring creativity to the table due to their collective ethnic identity.

Some critical management scholars criticise their peers for not offering any counter conduct. What the literature lacks is the mobilisation of critical insights into applicable tools and recommendations for practice (Holck et al., 2016). I believe it is fair to say that mainstream and critical diversity management researchers alike take an interest in management discourse and practice, albeit for different reasons. Team mainstream's keen interest in managerial approaches to diversity is to enable co-optation of diversity by the organisation. In stark contrast to the managerialism of the mainstream, we find emancipation and liberation as ends that the management of diversity, according to the critical group of scholars, should serve. Earlier in this

review, I presented a similar reading of the overall organisation studies literature. Researchers on both sides of competing views of organisations as either rational or natural (the human relations perspective) were equally interested in motivation theory – but with different intentions. Whereas the rational perspective sought to increase productivity and efficiency through motivation, the human relations perspective wanted to free workers from needless control and regulation and, instead, make work more human-friendly by means of understanding what motivated and, hence, satisfied workers' needs. In spite of their dissimilar ideas of motivation and its purpose, the fact of the matter is that both perspectives engage with motivation – neither questions it. The same goes for diversity management.

Admittedly, some critical studies have shown the difficulty in managing diversity (Christensen & Muhr, 2018; Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015). Yet, the conclusion drawn from such studies is not that diversity should *not* be managed. Management is not questioned. Diversity should, as the critique goes, merely be managed not as much or not in a particular way. The management focus has led to studies concentrating on workplace diversity over diversity in alternative organisations. Diversity studies seem to privilege workplace diversity over diversity in other types of organisation and organising phenomena. With reference to the work of Zanoni and Janssens (2007), Özbilgin and Tatli (2011) repeat that most diversity research is conducted with managers and employers, and that only a limited number of studies explore the perspectives of other actors. Such actors could, as the authors mention, be a trade union (as in articles two and three included in this dissertation) or a non-profit, volunteer-driven event organisation, such as Roskilde Festival (as in article four).

2.7.6 The philosophy of science behind organisational diversity

My review of diversity management literature, and the branch of scholars critical thereof, has also, at the same time, been a review of different philosophies of science; that is, different methodological approaches to organisational diversity, each with its own assumptions and limitations when it comes to scientific methods. Mainstream diversity management, producing knowledge that exclusively serves economic efficiency (Cabantous, Gond, Harding, & Learmonth, 2016), corresponds with a rational model of organisation and a modernist rationale. Moreover, it draws on positivist research traditions where diversity markers such a gender, sexuality and ethnicity become variables that can be manipulated and made proxies for presumed deeper underlying traits. And in establishing rules, laws and formulae to systematically record, index and evaluate diversity in organisations, diversity management becomes more than a practice – it becomes a science (cf. Taylor, 1911). This way, diversity is essentialised as inherent and immutable differences that can be rationalised in the sense that organisations, from this functionalist perspective, are believed to be able to optimise organisational processes through the correct composition of diversity components. On the other hand, we have a growing body of critical literature that, from a post-structuralist point of view (and a postmodernist rationale), observes diversity as socially constructed. This does not mean that diversity management discourse and practice in organisations have no material effects – they do. To conceive of diversity as a social construction is to say that the way in which organisational members are seen as either same or different depends on local and subjective perceptions (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013). That is, organisational diversity is a relational phenomenon that may change across time and context (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000).

The post-structuralist critiques of diversity management are also critiquing the politics of representation – a concern they share with anarchist organisation theory. For example, May (1989) argues that post-structuralist theory is indeed anarchist because it shares a refusal of both political and conceptual representation. I will pick up on the latter, but the reasoning is the same for both: where there is representation, there is oppression. As May puts it (1989: 179): 'What both traditional anarchism and contemporary post-structuralism seek is a society – or better, a set of intersecting societies – in which people are not told who they are, what they want, and how they shall live, but who will be able to determine these things for themselves.' Put simply, the problem of representation, as expressed in post-structuralist thought as well as in anarchist modes for organising, is the lack of self-determination that follows from it. Some examples. Throughout her authorship, Ahmed (2012, 2014, 2017, 2019) has argued persuasively that organisations frequently put diversity work in the hands of diversity subjects. This turns out to keep them busy with work that should be shouldered by those who produce the diversity problem. In being identified as diversity subjects and appointed to do diversity work because they are women, queer, persons of colour, etc., they are made representatives of their particular groups and of diversity more generally. And diversity managers get to formulate policies, practices and more on behalf of and for (other) diversity subjects. In effect, power is handed over from one group of people (the diversity subjects) to another group (the diversity managers) in order to have the interests of the former realised. Put simply, the diversity managers get to represent the diversity subjects to safeguard the latter's interests and the interests of the organisation. My review of mainstream and critical diversity management literature reminds us that these interests are not necessarily compatible, and in representing diversity subjects, diversity managers get to determine not only who the diversity subjects are, but also what they want.

Another thing that anarchist organisational principles and post-structuralist critiques have in common is a resistance to reducibility and abstraction more generally, which poses a critique of the way in which groups are homogenised in much diversity research when drawing on representational categories. The current battle between mainstream and critical scholarship is not whether diversity should be governed, but how. Ahonen et al. (2013: 277–278) put it thus: 'The difference between these writings (critical and mainstream) is political in that the emphasis is on social justice and organisational performance, respectively, but the strategic field of knowledge productions remains the same.' Here, anarchist organisation would suggest that difference needs to be recovered from the generality of diversity (categories).

This brings me to a final and overlooked area of diversity and its organisation; that of inclusion. The problem with representation is that those who embody diversity are included as objects of knowledge and excluded as knowing subjects in much mainstream organisation of diversity. Oswick and Noon (2014), therefore, argue that organising diversity is not enough: organisations ought to be inclusive too if they want to develop and, above all, retain a diverse workforce. In line with this, Roberson (2006) advocates for inclusion as the degree to which individuals feel part of critical organisational processes, meaning that obstacles to the full participation and contributions of employees will have to be removed. That is, inclusion is about organising difference so that a state of heterogeneity – diversity – may be achieved (Brewis, 2019). This type of inclusion, however, maintains focus on the individual at the detriment of groups that historically have been excluded. Oswick and Noon's (2014) review of discourses of equality, diversity and inclusion problematises the distinction made between diversity and inclusion. For, the underlying recognition that diversity management has not delivered on its promise of increased economic

performance due to the exchange value of employee differences as yet another organisational commodity makes the concept of inclusion seem more attractive, as it lends itself to the realisation of such missed business opportunities. The question is whether there is indeed any real distinction between the two – diversity and inclusion – or if the latter is merely a new buzzword that is heavily marketed as superior to its predecessor to create a sense of distinctiveness, like diversity management when replacing the approaches of equal opportunities and affirmative action.

2.7.7 Wrapping up the literature review

With this literature review I have established diversity as an organisation theoretical discipline and shown how we have come to know organisational diversity – what organisational diversity is. This was a necessary building block for me to continue conceptualising organisational diversity norm-critically. Eventually, my review also served the purpose of making potential contributions of norm critique recognisable as such in the light of shortcomings in the literature. Once we know in what ways the literature falls short, we can begin to familiarise ourselves with what may address those shortcomings. I have highlighted a number of gaps in the literature that this dissertation fills in, e.g. how non-conventional (alternative) organisations are vastly overlooked in studies of diversity and how the field lacks translations of critical theory into methods for intervening existing organisational diversity practices. My dissertation bridges these gaps (without claiming to overcome them completely) by studying alternative organisations (with article one as the only exception) and by developing norm-critical reflection exercises for diversity work (see article two).

What makes for an interesting contribution, however, is how my conceptualisation of norm critique challenges, if not denies, certain assumptions found throughout the literature review. One of these assumptions is how management remains largely unquestioned, even among its critics, many of which talk of different conducts to managing diversity but management nonetheless – maybe to seem more palatable to business. Another assumption, related to management, and which is also challenged by norm critique is the quantitative understanding of diversity in numerical terms as a matter of counting and contrasting with reference to categories of difference. Finally, norm critique challenges the idea that to manage diversity is mainly about the other, that is, diversity subjects. I will return to these assumptions, and not least how norm critique challenges them, in chapters five and nine where I, respectively, give an overview and conclude on the four articles and their contributions to answering the main research question.

3.0 A queered methodology

If I were to summarise in just one word what the methodologies of all four articles in this dissertation have in common, my choice would be *queering*. Queered methodologies 'encourage researchers to debunk the assumed stability and rationality of methodological process and procedure, destabilising what we consider to be "normal" in methodological practice' (Rumens 2018b: 108). Queered methodologies, in other words, exhibit a disloyalty to conventional disciplinary methods in the same way that, for example, queer theory betrays binary thinking, closed definitions and power hierarchies in relation to categories for gender and sexuality. I write of queer*ed* and not queer methodologies because the latter assumes the existence of a stable and uniform methodology, premised on rationality and coherence, that can be said to be queer – a contradiction in terms. This is also one reason why, in the third article of this dissertation, I write of norm critique as queer*ing* organisational diversity research with an eye to the performative quality of methodology. To queer methodology is to say that it *does* something to the methodological norms governing organisational research practice. Congruent with the argument put forth in my third article, to queer methodology is to think of it more in terms of an orientation than a means. The queerness does not sit well with the confinement of research paradigms, which is why I will go on to present my project as *post-paradigmatic* (Pernecky 2016) in cutting across the continua of paradigmatic thinking so as not to delimit philosophical diversity. Here follows the body of thought from which the project has taken shape.
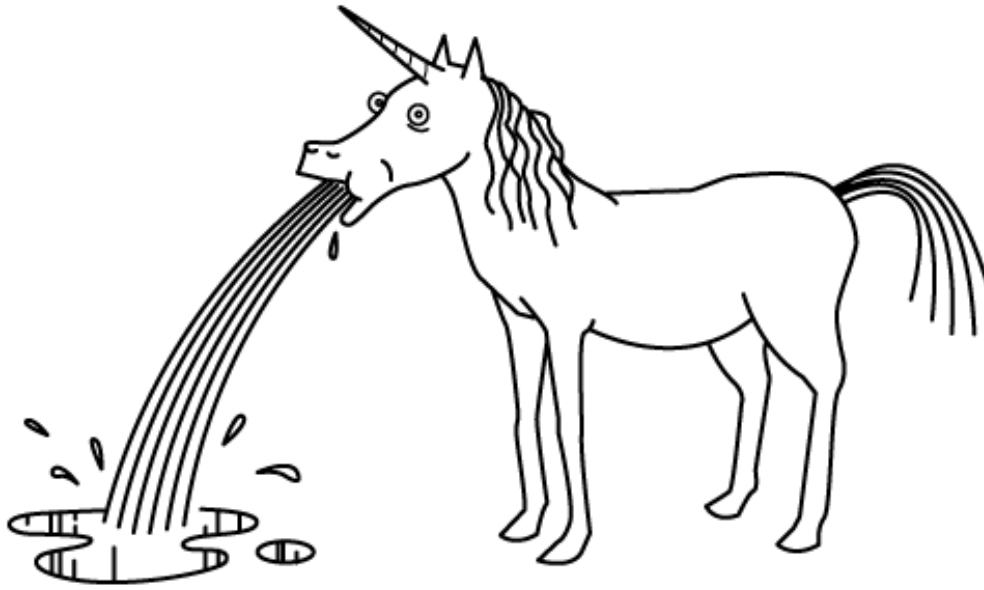
Figure 4: What queering does to methodology.

3.1 AFFECT(IVITY) AND EMBODIMENT

In previous work of mine, I have discussed the personal experience of difference becoming a matter of comfort in organised spaces (Basner, Christensen, French, & Schreven, 2018). Since any given space is organised around norms, organisational space is constituted by the exclusion of that which or those who do not inhabit said norms. This means that those who can embody the organisational norms may also find comfort in inhabiting them. Yet, as Ahmed (2014: 149) explains, this availability of comfort for some will depend on the labour of others, who become diversity workers in their efforts to downplay their discomfort in not fitting in: 'Comfort may operate as a form of "feeling fetishism": some bodies can "have" comfort, only as an effect of the work of others, where the work itself is concealed from view.' I take from this quote, and from my personal experience of inhabiting a normative organisational space differently, that diversity is *of the body*, that it is

embodied. Consequently, my methodology had to be developed in such a way as to make me sense-able (Ashcraft, 2017) of diversity not only as discourse but also as corporeal. The *corporeality* of diversity has to do with how one resides in the world – whether one's body fits or misfits the shape (norm) that the world has taken. Here, I will, for the sake of clarity, quote Garland-Thomson (2011) at length:

> *Fitting* and *misfitting* denote an encounter in which two things come together in either harmony or disjunction. When the shape and the substance of these two things correspond in their union, they fit. A *misfit*, conversely, describes an incongruent relationship between two things: a square peg in a round hole. The problem with a misfit, then, inheres not in either of the two things but rather in their juxtaposition, the awkward attempt to fit them together. (592–593, emphasis in original)

What Garland-Thomson (2011) is arguing for is a shift from the discursive to the material and the relationship between the two. Given that particularities of embodiment interact with the environment in the broadest sense, *spatiality* and how space is organised become important because to fit – that is, to be able to slip into the world with relative ease due to the world having taken 'your' shape (Ashcraft, 2013) – will grant you material anonymity. The opposite is true for bodies whose shapes do not fit the existing shape of the world; they are rendered visible. Due to their visibility, bodies of misfits often become sites for intervention. But Garland-Thomson's (2011) concept of misfit reminds us that the misfitting occurs in two things coming together and in their *misalignment*, meaning there is another possible site for intervention: 'One of the fundamental premises of disability politics is that

social justice and equal access should be achieved by changing the shape of the world, not changing the shape of our bodies' (Garland-Thomson 2011: 597).

The same premise is found in, for example, gay and queer politics (Fraser, 1995) that seek to change the shapes of institutions such as marriage to either include couples of same-sex bodies or dismantle such differentiating institutions altogether. The problem, according to the quote above, is not that someone is disabled. In fact, one is never disabled per se. One may be impaired, but disability emerges as a problematic in particular situations when the body meets the world and the latter does not accommodate the former. Disability, therefore, is not the problem; the problem is how the body is made disabled in relation to and with a given shape of the world. No-body *is* a misfit; you *become* one. Let me explain with an example that we used in FIU-Ligestilling – one of the case organisations in article two.

When facilitating norm-critical workshops, we often share two images to initiate among the participants critical reflection around organisational norms (the shapes that organisation has taken, if using the vocabulary of Garland-Thomson, 2011). The images are of a public square leading to the entrance of a building, which they are asked to think of as either their workplace or a public institution that, ideally, everybody (e.g. colleagues, customers, partners and, in principle, all members of the public) should be able to access. In front of the entrance to the building, however, is a staircase. In the first picture, the staircase consists of a number of steps, whereas in the second picture, a ramp is integrated into the design of the steps. For the exercise, we ask the participants to reflect on who is accommodated by each of the two staircase designs; that is, who is included and who is excluded (who fits

and who becomes misfits), and not only from using the stairs, but also from using the building.
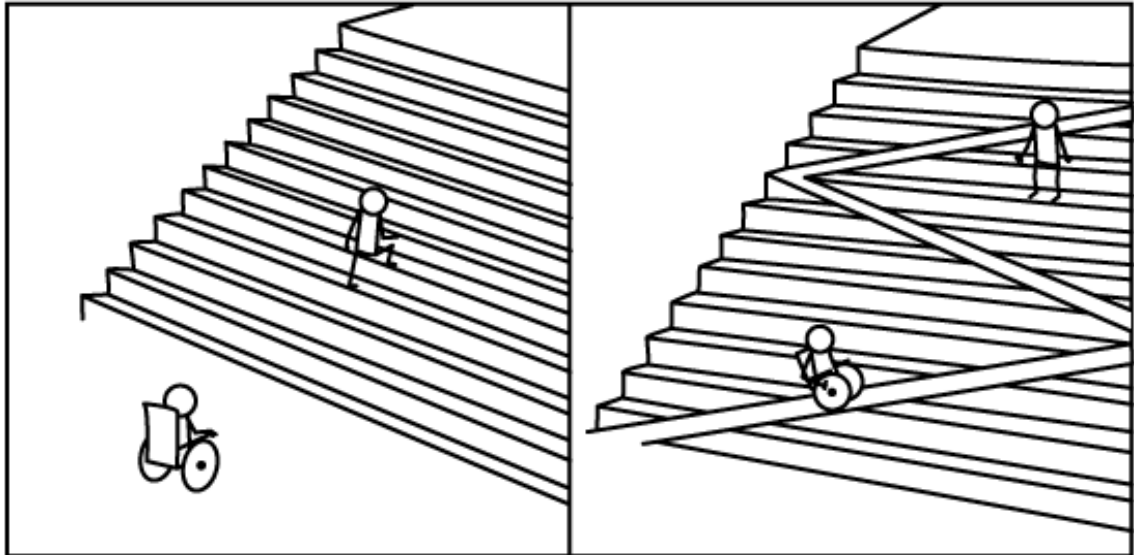
Usually, participants agree that the design in the second image, the one depicting steps with a fully integrated ramp, caters for greater diversity than the first image in the sense that it is shaped to also meet the needs of, for instance, wheelchair users, parents with baby carriages, people with (temporary) walking difficulties, people of old age, etc. In making a ramp part of the design of the steps, bodies – that, in the case of the first picture, would become misfits when facing the obstacle of the steps – can remain relatively anonymous given that they can just use the stairs, as can the bodies whose shapes are already accommodated by the design in the first picture. Put differently, those who would otherwise have been robbed of their anonymity in becoming visible at an individual level when facing steps they cannot use (the experience of misfit), instead become visible at a structural level because their

bodily shapes are included and, thus, allowed to give shape to the staircase design in the second picture. The point is, that in bringing together people and things to organise stuff (a basic definition of organisation, cf. Parker, 2018), and producing organisations in that process, normative assumptions come to affect the organising; for example, the assumption that everybody is capable of walking on two legs, or indeed that everybody has two legs. As the organising produces organisations, the assumption becomes embedded in the organisation and is turned into an expectation – an expectation that not everybody can live up to. In consequence, we may say that diversity is *not* a problem to organisation; it is a *condition*.

My reason for bringing up the example with the two staircases is to illustrate how the organisation of (diversity) subjects is 'an inherently *material* and *discursive* construct, and happens through the political engineering of sociomaterial agencements' (Cabantous et al., 2016: 197, my emphasis) and is also always *affective* (Just, Muhr, & Burø, 2017). I have shown in the literature review (chapter 2) how critical approaches to organising diversity, and in particular critiques of diversity management, have their theoretical roots in the linguistic, material and affective turns. These turns draw on a wide variety of sources, including critical queer-feminist understandings of how subjects are constructed in discourses of difference (and assumed in-group sameness), feminist philosophies of the body (e.g. Butler & Malabou, 2011), sociomateriality (e.g. Barad, 2003, 2007) and affect theory (e.g. Ahmed 2014; Steward 2007). Of particular importance to my methodology is the way discourses of difference are perceived by and through *the body* (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Ashcraft, 2013; Fotaki, Metcalfe, & Hardin, 2014; Wetherell, 2015) and influenced by the space in which these take place (cf. my example with the two staircases).

As a side note, I would like to comment on a remark that Ahmed (2014b) makes in the afterword to the second edition of her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* and which becomes relevant because of my framing of the discursive, material and affective as *turns*. The turn to affect, she writes, gives credit to male authors as its originators; she presents a feminist critique of the framing of the affective turn as a turn to affect, saying the implication of that framing is that 'we had to turn to affect (defined primarily in Deleuze's Spinozian terms) in order to show how mind is implicated in body; reason in passion. But feminist work on bodies and emotions *challenged from the outset mind-body dualisms*, as well as the distinction between reason and passion' (Ahmed, 2014b: 206, italics in original).

To talk about a turn to affect is to suggest that researchers have changed the direction of their analytical strategies towards affectivity to attend to this as an object of/for study. The turn, therefore, implies that there is something new about studying affectivity; but as Ahmed (2014b) points out, this is a truth with some modifications, since particularly queer-feminist research has, as the quote above states, problematised binaries such as reason/emotion and thereby argued for their mutual implication prior to the existence of affect studies as a field of its own. Her concern is that 'when the affective turn becomes a turn to affect, feminist and queer work are no longer positioned as part of that turn. Even if they are acknowledged as precursors, as shift *to* affect signals a shift *from* this body of work' (ibid.: 2016, italics in original). My only reason for framing the discursive, material and affective as turns is to signal how they often have been and still are treated separately. That is, a turn to the material sometimes becomes a turn from the discursive. But it does not have to be a turn *away* from the discursive. Discursive, material and affective constructions of difference form what we might call a *diversity triad*, by which I want to communicate how they work not only as separate but also as *intersecting*

phenomena that *co-construct* organisational diversity – for example, through the interpretations and translations that take place when discourses materialise and produce moods and atmospheres or when moods and atmospheres materialise and influence ideological discourses.

To concretise, we may turn to Ahmed's (2014a) essay about the sociality of moods, in which she states that much of what she calls diversity work involves some sort of *moodwork*. Mood, to Ahmed, is '*an affective lens*, affecting how we are affected' (Ahmed, 2014a: 14, italics in original). Mood is, as she elaborates, a matter of being *in relation* to others and, therefore, not something specific to any individual. Rather, mood should be understood as an *atmosphere*: 'it is not that we catch a feeling from another person but that we are caught up in feelings that are not our own' (Ahmed, 2014a: 15). One may notice the link to Hocschild's (1983) notion of emotional labour as the process by which one minimises the gap between how one should feel and how one does feel. Thus, affect can be understood as discursively produced but is also non-discursive, although not, strictly speaking, prediscursive as, for example, in Massumi's (2015) definition. Affect is circulated among bodies, including my own, which becomes a moody figure in fieldwork. This quality of moodiness allows for the detection of how those who come to embody diversity are made strangers *by* organisational norms and, as a result, become bodies out of place, or not in the 'right' place (Ahmed, 2014a). In sum, through an affective lens diversity is not only about the social categories used, it is also the *politics* of diversity as well as the *emotion* this engenders (Lindsay, Jack, & Ambrosini, 2018).

3.2 POST-PARADIGMATIC QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

I understand qualitative research as an *orientation* (as is also evident from the reference in the dissertation's title to norm-critical orientations) and more so than as a means. Here, I think of the distinction made by Pernecky (2016: 187) when writing that taken as a means, methodology 'is for the achievement of desired goals and we are generally speaking of a set of methods or "tools"'. However, to the extent that methods are tools, they may do different things depending on who is using them (Ahmed, 2019: 17). That is, the (re)use of the same method or tool may not necessarily produce the same output, just as the use of a different method or tool does not automatically create a different output. My point is, that in leaning towards a conception of methodology as an orientation, the concern for methods used is intertwined with 'the act of acquiring knowledge' and its 'potential implications for various stakeholders' (Pernecky, 2016: 187–188). I expand on this idea of norm-critical research as an orientation in article three. Given that a main concern – and desired goal – of this project is to inquire into organisational diversity, and given that one of the deadlocks found in my review of extant literature on diversity and its organisation is being bound by rigid paradigmatic research traditions (positivist vs critical and post-structuralist), I have adopted a *post-paradigmatic* approach to qualitive research.

To say that the project is post-paradigmatic is to say that it breaks with established research paradigms. The 'post', therefore, should not be understood as 'after', nor as 'beyond', but merely as *cutting across* the continua of paradigmatic thinking so as not to delimit philosophical diversity. Dichotomies of philosophy of science are circulated over and over again. I intentionally write dichotomies 'of' and not 'in' because I consider these dichotomies a product *of* philosophy of science. Popularly speaking, research can be positioned as, and is often restricted to, one of two

paradigms, that, as a result, appear to be on either end of a scale and in opposition to each other. At one end, we observe forms of positivism; at the other, variants of interpretative social constructivism. In the literature review of diversity and its organisation, I focused primarily on post-structuralism as a radical form of social constructivism. This way of presenting research philosophies, however, may be considered an oversimplification, a generalisation. And that is the point exactly: the dichotomies no longer (if they ever did) serve the qualitative researcher, because they generalise and, therefore, exclude that which is in-between the contrasts. The risk of thinking according to one or other of the paradigms is that it comes to serve as a framework telling us what and how to think, thereby foreclosing creative thinking (Pernecky, 2016). This is a problematic similar to the one I address in my fourth article, about critical thinking alongside a paranoid hermeneutics of suspicion that forecloses surprise and, hence, other things to know as well as other understandings. I will go on to give a brief introduction to post-structuralism and new materialism, respectively, which I consider to be the two research paradigms that this project, broadly speaking, cuts across.

3.2.1 Post-structuralism

As with post-paradigmatic, the 'post' in post-structuralism does not mean after or beyond, but merely signifies a reconfiguration of structuralism into a radical constructivism where the world as we know it is perceived as mediated through language (Esmark, Laustsen, & Andersen, 2005). Epistemologically, we can only understand reality through the language that is at our disposal. Yet, language, in post-structuralist thinking, is not referential and, therefore, is not taken to refer to an external world (as in outside of language) believed to exist independently of mediation, a priori our perception of it. To assume a point of reference in the material world is to suggest a natural and static relationship between a given sign

and what that sign represents, in which case the referent in the real world comes to give substance and meaning to the sign. Following this premise would mean to accept that the world creates our language. However, from a post-structuralist point of view, meaning stems from relational and differential processes of signification (Howarth, 2013). In other words, language retrieves its meaning in the relationship between signs – something that I clarify in the first article, in which I construct an analytical strategy premised on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory.

I recall how, in my master's thesis, I used a dictionary as an example to convey this idea that signs do not have any intrinsic values by virtue of them corresponding to 'real'-world objects. The dictionary is where we look up words whose meaning we are not quite sure of. And a dictionary is, as a frame of reference, probably best described as a collection of signs, each defined in relation to one another. Signs describe signs and are compared based on similarity (synonyms) and difference (antonyms). If we take seriously the ideas and insights from social constructivism, we must also treat the researcher and her knowledge as social constructions; this means that we need to attend to our own position(ality) as researchers (Cruz, 2016, 2017). Critical awareness and self-reflection (Alvesson & Sköllberg, 2009) throughout the research process will serve as a counterweight to an otherwise unconscious reproduction of the very existing ideas and thoughts that the researcher – from a critical perspective – seeks to critique. Though it should be mentioned that the critical potential of my project should not be judged based on its ability to overcome what it is critiquing. As I explicitly warn at the end of article two, norm-critical research is a practice without end if one is to avoid unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another. That is, norm critique does have an end (as in an aim or a goal), which is to intervene in dominant organisational norms for the sake

of organisational diversity, but that end can never be treated as having been reached in any absolute sense.

3.2.2 New materialism

In writing up embodied apprehensions (Ashcraft, 2017) of organisational diversity, my work also takes inspiration from new materialism and the (re)turn to matter. As Fox and Alldred (2017: 4) point out, new materialism should by no means be taken as a shift away from the linguistic turn of post-structuralism or constructivism in general. Instead, it is more accurate to think of new materialist research as a development in social inquiry that takes some of its inspiration from social constructivist and post-structuralist insights while extending these so that they also embrace a concern for the material workings of power. In cutting across the dualism of agency/structure, the former is replaced by affect and the latter is dissolved, since there is no 'other level' or overarching structure that works behind the scenes – this is why I repeatedly stress that social and organisational norms may come to function as a structure in spite of being kept in place only as an effect of repetition. The new materialist research studies not social *construction* but social *production* of events (e.g. how organisational norms produce their 'other' as organisational diversity), as do I in the fourth article.

If turning to the scholarship of Barad (2003, 2007), events may be better understood as phenomena – an understanding she, in turn, arrives at from reading the work of Danish quantum physicist Niels Bohr. According to her interpretation of Bohr's work, a phenomenon is a specific instance of interaction (intra-action) between both the object(s) of study and the observer (researcher), as well as both sides (hence the idea of cutting across) of the nature/culture and word/world dualisms. What Bohr discovered is that the act of observation appears to determine the outcome of

subatomic interactions (Fox & Alldred, 2017: 19). Simply put, depending on the research set-up, atoms would show *either* particle *or* wave-like behaviour. It therefore becomes meaningless to talk about objects of study as independent entities existing a priori our observation or prior to their 'intra-action'. The implication for social sciences is that matter and meaning become inextricably fused (Barad, 2007: 3).

With the exception of the first article, I have taken an approach to coding and data analysis that is different from the normal conduct presented in many published journal articles. My first article is an example of using dominant codes to steer the analysis. The analysis is, as a matter of fact, structured around the codes that were used for sorting the data. This is not problematic in itself. The practice does, however, exemplify the remnants of *representationalism* left in (some) post-structuralist research (MacLure, 2016). Think about what we (and I include myself in this 'we') do when coding qualitative research. We quantify and decide what parts of the data set will make it to the analysis based on how many times a certain code is interpreted to be represented and, therefore, of analytical relevance. While not wrong, such research practice is flawed for the following reason: the procedure of coding comes with a built-in risk of leaving out details that fall outside the boundaries of a given code – details that matter in the sense that their exclusion nevertheless shapes the boundaries of the code. The role of new materialism to this project, therefore, is one of extending post-structuralism or, rather, taking the 'post' to its fullest; for example, challenging the logic of representation inherent in categorisation of diversity, but also asserting that social (human) constructs such as organisational norms are part of materiality. That is, it is possible to regard social constructions as objectively, really existing (Alvesson & Sköllberg, 2009: 39) because their effects are real, as in material to people. Organisational norms become

as real as Ahmed's (2019) brick wall is to the diversity subjects that run their foreheads against it.

3.3 BEYOND TOOLS: BODY AND CONCEPT AS METHODS

> Methods are often taught generically as if you use a different method in order to create a different output. Maybe methods are not simply tools, or if they are tools, maybe they do different things depending on who uses them, with this *who* being understood as not simply an individual but someone shaped by many histories – intellectual, social, other. (Ahmed, 2019: 17)

Affect takes away many tools and does not add that many new ones. I understand research methods not as ready-made tools with which to collect or gather data or evidence but, rather, as the techniques applied in the generation or production of empirical material. By 'techniques', I mean to imply that research methods are not external to the researcher who makes use of them. So, to the extent that we may think of methods as tools, I will argue, in line with the quote above, that the tools inevitably take shape from the hands and bodies that wield them. And I go one step further in arguing that my body *is* my method. As Perry and Medina (2011: 63) state: 'The body is our method, our subject, our means of making meaning, representing, and performing.' Whether conscious of it or not, 'researchers begin with the body' (Ellingson, 2017: 1). The table below summarises the data used for each article as well as the methods with which the data were produced.

Figure 6: Getting entangled with data.

3.3.1 Summary of data and methods used

Articles	*Data*
Article one	Open-ended and unstructured interviews (lasting from 1 to 2.5 hours) with 45 individual leaders (23 men and 22 women) in 37 different organisations
Article two	Field notes (based on immediate recall) from participatory observations (due to co-facilitation) of 18 norm-critical workshops (12 in Sabaah and 6 in FIU-Ligestilling, lasting between 1.5 and 3 hours) Collective reflections with co-facilitators from evaluating each workshop

Article three	Qualitative part of a survey with approximately 1,100 respondents and 1,500 comment entries from self-identified LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ members of PROSA (the latter group making up the majority)
	Follow-up focus group interviews for both groups with seven LGBT+ and six non-LGBT+ participants
Article four	Field notes from two full festival periods (in 2018 and 2019, each lasting eight days)
	Field notes from one annual cycle in Roskilde Festival (September 2017 through August 2018) as well as from recurring visits throughout my PhD, including notes from onboarding, workshops, meetings and events
	20 individual (with the exception of one two-person group) semi-structured background interviews with employees and 'fireballs' (volunteers putting in more than 100 hours annually) (lasting between 30 and 90 minutes) exploring the festival, its organisation and volunteering in relation to diversity
	53 mini interviews (lasting between 5 and 15 minutes) with regular volunteers at the festival to get their perceptions of diversity and how it affects their volunteer experience at Roskilde Festival
	Pictures, sound recordings and video recordings.
	Note that far from all of my data are used directly in the article. In fact, only a fraction is used due to the focus of the article. I discuss this in the article as part of my reflections on theory and methods. The reason

for listing all my material here is to give an overview, as the data, whether explicitly put to use or not, inevitably affects my understanding of the case organisation. My accumulation of data also points to something that I will revert back to in Chapter 9 (conclusion and discussion), namely that my research project does not to end with the submission of this dissertation. The conclusion of this PhD project marks the beginning of future research avenues. For example, and as I also briefly mention in the article, my norm-critical focus in the field has led to an interest in transgressive behaviours at the festival (something that is possible to observe only because there are norms for behaviour that can be transgressed). To that end, I have, together with a team, conducted 61 structured interviews with festival participants in their camps during the festival in 2019. These interviews are yet to be processed and are, therefore, mentioned separately from my 'own' data.

Since discursive categories are performative in constituting what they name (King, 2016), I have been able to identify discourses using both interview and observation methods (and not just through language itself as a more narrow linguistic tradition would argue); for example, through searching for normative constructions of diversity and, hence, discursive categories 'whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline regulation, [and] punishment' (Butler, 1993: 266). Discourse is defined in a broader Butlerian (and Foucauldian) sense as a system of power-knowledge internalised via *bodily* practices (Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1977). Affect is *entangled* with and motivated by discourse, although not reducible to discourse (Knudsen & Stage, 2015 – see also Fotaki, Kenny, &

Vacchani, 2017). The out-of-the-armchair approach, practiced particularly in the norm-critical workshops of article two, draws on a strong tradition of participative action research within feminist organisational scholarship to affirmatively and constructively prompt changes by way of tempered radicalism (Meyerson & Scully, 1995). I expand on what is meant by critique of affirmation in that article. In the section below, I will elaborate on the methods specific to each article. Moreover, I will present the research context of each case organisation.

3.4 RESEARCH CONTEXT

My dissertation may be considered a multi-case study – however, not in the conventional way that has generalisability as its research aim. Whereas the purpose of adopting multiple cases usually is to find similarities between them in order to arrive at a generalised conclusion about what holds true in all of the cases, whether statistically or theoretically – and, therefore, must also be true more generally (Baskarada, 2014) – the purpose of my engagement with multiple case organisations was to allow ample opportunities for exploring difference. And my aim was not necessarily to look for difference between the case organisations. My research aim was never to be able to generalise across them but, rather, to put their utilities to different use (Ahmed, 2019), thereby enabling learning (from) their particularities. The premise for this project, that diversity is embodied, meant that my understanding of diversity would be contingent upon which organisations, which organising activities and, hence, which people I would orientate myself toward and involve in the project. Involving them would not just make them part of the project; they would become the project. To appreciate my norm-critical conceptualisation of diversity as organisation, one must know the case organisations that each, in their own ways, make up the particular research contexts in which my norm-critical thinking could materialise. I write 'materialise' to stress that this thinking did not

happen as an activity of the mind separate from the body. The thinking happened through the body; mine as well as those of others. As such, I am committed when I say that my body is my method.

3.4.1 Overview of case organizations

Articles	*Organisations*
Article one	37 different public and private sector organisations representing large conventional workplaces
Article two	**Sabaah:** a non-profit, volunteer-driven organisation representing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people with minority ethnic backgrounds in Denmark **FIU-Ligestilling:** a collaborative organisation, involving several Danish labour unions, around diversity, inclusion and diversity work
Article three	**PROSA:** a trade union for IT professionals in Denmark
Article four	**Roskilde Festival:** a regenerative one-week long festival event with 130,000 participants annually, of which 30,000 are volunteers, and a non-profit organisation donating to public benevolent purposes

3.4.2 Research context of article one

This first article in the dissertation is based on interviews with 45 top managers in 37 different organisations, some of which are public and others private, spanning across a number of sectors and industries from consulting, banking and accounting

to ministries, postal services and retail businesses. They vary in size (mostly large in the Danish context, having 200 or more employees), but all have in common that they are among the 110 or so Danish organisations that had signed a ministerial, yet voluntary, charter for working towards greater gender diversity (read: more women) in management positions. Only organisations that had signed that charter were approached to take part in the study, and the 37 organisations represented in the data are those that accepted the invitation to take part in the study. This data set also forms the empirical foundation for other published work of mine (see Christensen & Muhr 2019). However, the article included in this dissertation is the first publication in which analysis of these data appears (see also Muhr, 2019).

Interviews were conducted between 2010 and 2013 with the CEO/director of each organisation and, where possible, an additional executive or top manager to also allow for women interviewees to be included in the interviews. A balanced group of 23 men and 22 women took part, with interviews following an unstructured guide consisting of open-ended questions around the topics of identity, gender and leadership. The interviews were not held with a specific research purpose, as such, in mind, other than exploring managers' perceptions and viewpoints on the topics in question. To allow ample time for diving into personal stories and narratives about the topics and also to make sure that interviewees could, on their own initiative, bring up the issues they found relevant, each interview lasted between one hour and two and a half hours. And all interviews were conducted by my co-author. I, on the other hand, took the lead on data coding and analysis, which – as elaborated on in the article – was a matter of constructing a specific analytical strategy as a lens through which the data were 'read' anew.

3.4.3 Research context of article two

Like the other articles in this dissertation, this one is the product of a Danish research setting. This one, however, draws on empirical material from two fairly different organisations. One is an organised collaboration between three of the biggest trade unions in Denmark; the other is a non-profit, non-governmental, volunteer-driven breakout organisation that, so to say, began to organise outside of another organisation. The trade union collaboration organisation is called FIU-Ligestilling. The other case organisation is named Sabaah. For the sake of simplicity, I will present them one at a time.

FIU-Ligestilling is a collaboration or partnership between several of the biggest trade unions in Denmark to offer internal training courses on equality (in Danish, *ligestilling*) issues related to the Danish labour market in general and, in particular, the workplaces of trade union members. In Denmark, the majority of workers are trade union members, and union density is among the highest in the world. Equality is broadly understood as relating to gender, sexuality, (dis)ability (typically denoted as handicap in the Danish context) and religion. Common for the Danish context, gender and ethnicity are the two overarching areas of focus. This means that equality work often takes the form of addressing sexual harassment, the gender-segregated labour market, integration of minority ethnic employees and prevention of discrimination with regards to these two specific categories, that are also protected classes in national legislation.

When I first became engaged with FIU-Ligestilling in 2016, three major trade unions were involved: Dansk Metal (which organises metalworkers), 3F (the largest union in Denmark in terms of membership but also the number of collective

agreements covering both skilled and unskilled workers) and Serviceforbundet (consisting of ten discrete unions, e.g. for watchmakers and opticians, hairdressers and cosmeticians, and veterinary nurses). Since then, two more unions have joined: Dansk Sygeplejeråd (which organises nurses) and HK (which organises wage-earning and salaried office workers, including state officials, making it the second-largest union in Denmark in terms of membership, due to the public sector being a relatively large employer). Other unions are not excluded from FIU-Ligestilling, even if not directly involved in the partnership. FIU-Ligestilling offers courses on request but charges unions that are not part of the collaboration. I have, for example, facilitated workshops for Teknisk Landsforbund (the association for professional technicians) during my engagement with FIU-Ligestilling.

While gender (understood in binary terms as men and women) and ethnicity remain the main areas of concern for equality work in FIU-Ligestilling, gender identity and sexual orientation began to receive more attention as I entered the organisation – not because I was the one to introduce those focus areas to the palette of equality issues but because the trade union movement more broadly had become aware of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) as a significant yet overlooked member group. A representative survey of the Danish labour market, conducted for three union confederations (two of which have now merged), revealed that many workers who self-identify as LGBTQ+ remained closeted at work. That is, they refrained from disclosing their LGBTQ+ status, among other reasons, in anticipation that disclosure could potentially lead to them facing various forms of discrimination. The survey also strongly indicated that many of the LGBTQ+ respondents did not know if their trade union representatives would be open, let alone able, to handle cases of discrimination on the basis of gender identity and

sexual orientation.[5] One of the union confederations that commissioned the survey took these insights as a call to strengthen their equality work in these particular areas. Thus, funding was allocated for a three-year period to develop within the FIU-Ligestilling collaboration a training programme that would qualify union representatives to include LGBTQ+ more explicitly in their equality work. This marked the inception of my research collaboration with FIU-Ligestilling.

I, together with two other teachers and one coordinator, helped develop the workshop format offered in FIU-Ligestilling and co-facilitated these throughout the three-year period of the project, which, as I submit this dissertation, has reached its formal conclusion (albeit it is yet to be evaluated). While the second article in the dissertation is based on empirical data generated during the first year (2017) of the FIU-Ligestilling LGBTQ+ project, I continued my active engagement with the organisation throughout my own project. As is the case with all organisations included in this PhD project (except for the ones in article one), my engagement was never a matter of me entering to get the data *I* needed, only to leave again, closing the door behind me with no regard for *their* needs. My insistent use of the word 'engagement' with reference to the cases is an attempt at conveying how my relationship with the organisations is one of continuous and mutual commitment. Although less intensely, I continued to influence the further development of the LGBTQ+ project in FIU-Ligestilling. Seeing the project through inevitably had an influence on my thinking beyond the publication of the second article. At the time of its publication, I had facilitated a total of six workshops for FIU-Ligestilling. And it is my observations from these workshops (participatory in nature due to my dual

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[5] I expand on some of the findings from the survey in the third article.

role as researcher-facilitator) as well as collective reflection before and after the workshops when planning and evaluating with my co-facilitators that make up the empirical material analysed in article two.

Sabaah, the other organisation whose workshop format – similar to that of FIU-Ligestilling – contributed to the empirical material of article two, organises for the values of diversity, inclusion and equality. It is a breakout organisation of LGBT Denmark, which is an interest organisation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Denmark. LGBT Denmark was founded in 1948 (albeit under a less inclusive acronym), which makes it one of the longest established LGBTQ+ organisations in the world. Sabaah was founded in 2006, not in protest against LGBT Denmark but out of a felt need among certain members to break with some normative structures (essentially a whiteness norm) that were found to exclude the lived realities of LGBTQ+ people with minority ethnic backgrounds in Denmark. The raison d'être of Sabaah, therefore, is to work at the intersections of not only gender identity and sexual orientation, but also ethnicity, race, culture and religion.

Internally, Sabaah works socially and culturally to create a community in which the specificities of their members are reflected. Externally, the organisation works politically, and in other ways, with the outreach project that I became part of in early 2016 when the project was in its infancy and, thus, still under development. Like in FIU-Ligestilling, I helped develop the workshop format and also go went on to co-facilitate – always with someone representing Sabaah's target group (minority ethnic LGBTQ+ persons in Denmark). The workshops are offered mainly to pupils in lower secondary education but, in principle, to any organisation requesting a workshop, provided that Sabaah has the capacity to meet the demand. Notes (using

the technique of immediate recall) from a total of 12 participatory observations made up part of the empirical material for the second article. As with FIU-Ligestilling, I continued my engagement with Sabaah post publication, and I am still affiliated as I submit this dissertation.

3.4.4 Research context of article three

My engagement with PROSA – a trade union for IT professionals in Denmark and the case organisation in the third article of this dissertation – was agreed on roughly a year and a half into my PhD journey; that is, halfway through my PhD period. It was one of those encounters I had not anticipated. As a follow-up to the 2016 survey about openness among LGBT+ workers in the Danish labour market in general (the one mentioned in the section above, and whose details I elaborate on in the third article), PROSA wanted to conduct their own survey to see if they stood out in any way. Organising people that work in the IT profession, PROSA expected that those of their members identifying as LGBT+ would report a degree of openness greater than that of the Danish labour market in general. This expectation came from a self-understanding that IT as a profession tends to be queer, attracting the ones that are seen as a little odd in the eyes of most other people. In PROSA, they did not use the word 'queer'. It was implied, however, that IT often became the home of the nerdy and geeky (words they take pride in and use in positive terms to describe themselves in PROSA) who are otherwise excluded. It was for this reason assumed that IT workplaces would be more accepting and inclusive of people's differences – also when it comes to LGBT+ status.

To put to the test the assumption about a general openness and inclusiveness of that which deviates from the mainstream – the norm – I was asked to team up with an

external and an internal consultant to design a survey, analyse the results and report on findings. A reference to the final report (in Danish) is included in the footnotes of the third article. Of importance to the research context of that article is how the survey produced excessive qualitative material that I decided to use empirically in the article. To aid our understanding of some of the statistics produced in the quantitative part of the survey, we had enabled open-ended comments for almost all questions. Not only were these used by respondents to contextualise their answers; they were also used, and extensively so, to share unreserved opinions about the premise of the survey: that sexuality (and gender identity) is of relevance in workplaces.

In total, we received more than 1,500 comments from around 1,100 respondents. Among the respondents were both people identifying as LGBT+ and non-LGBT+. The latter group of non-LGBT+ people made up the majority; they were asked the same or similar questions as the group of LGBT+ respondents. The survey was, in other words, designed with some of the principles developed in article two in mind; for example, making room for the majority (in this case people *not* identifying as LGBT+) to reflect on how they relate to norms (in this case for sexuality and gender identity). This was an activist move in the sense that we had already, by asking these questions about openness with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity in various work situations (questions that are deemed relevant to the group of LGBT+ respondents; also cf. previous surveys), intervened by implying to the majority that their sexualities and genders are also relevant in workplace contexts. To allow for further feedback on the survey, we arranged follow-up focus group interviews, conducted separately for self-identifying LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ respondents, with, respectively, seven and six participants in each category.

3.4.5 Research context of article four

Roughly half a year into the PhD journey I went astray from the path I had laid out ahead. Redirecting myself along the way, I bumped into Roskilde Festival and got stuck. I still am. Stuck. I joined the organisation in September 2017 after the conclusion of the festival event that year. This circumstance I took as an opportunity to acquaint myself with the organisation. A privilege, really, to follow the organisation for a full year before my first encounter with the actual festival event. Being with the organisation for a full annual cycle – that is, from the conclusion of one festival to the kick-off of another – allowed me to render the strange familiar (in familiarising myself with the organisation, its members, structures and culture), after which what had become known to me would turn strange again in my encounter with the festival event that I, until that point, had only heard of but not experienced in person. In anthropological terms, one may say that I oscillated back and forth between the etic and emic positions, since I entered the organisation as an outsider and became an insider during the first year in the organisation, only to become an outsider again at the festival event. I had no prior knowledge of, nor any personal experience with, Roskilde Festival, which is what the organisation found interesting about me. Holding no nostalgic memories about the festival of the past and no normative idea(l)s for the festival of the future, the hope was that I could hold up a mirror from a different angle so that the organisation could be reflected in new light.

By the time I submit this dissertation, I will have attended Roskilde Festival twice (in 2018 and 2019) and will be preparing my engagement at the festival in 2020, during which they celebrate their 50th anniversary. That makes Roskilde Festival one of the oldest of its kind. It has, however, changed a lot since its inception in 1971 when it was first held in the hippie spirit of that time and taking inspiration

from Woodstock. Today, Roskilde Festival is a music, arts and activism event that, with its eight stages and over 200 acts, attracts 130,000 participants. This makes the festival the largest in Northern Europe, and since most participants live on-site in tent camps, Roskilde Festival becomes the fourth-largest city in Denmark while it takes place. In spite of this sheer size of the actual festival event, the organisation behind it employs only about 60 people in full-time salaried positions. Some in the organisation refer to Roskilde Festival as the bumblebee that does not know itself to be unable to fly because it flies anyway. What allows Roskilde Festival to take off year after year is the collective effort of roughly 30,000 volunteers. This, in turn, enables the organisation to generate a considerable economic surplus that, in accordance with its status as non-profit, is donated to charitable organisations and causes.

I found Roskilde Festival interesting both personally and professionally and saw the interests as overlapping. For one, I had never attended Roskilde Festival. In fact, attending never even appeared to me as a viable option. Without knowing exactly why or when, I had (prematurely) arrived at the conclusion that festivals were not for me. And this is what made it interesting to me both personally and professionally, because Roskilde Festival changed my own stereotypical perceptions of what festivals can be. Specifically for my study of organisational diversity, I learned early on that Roskilde Festival, as part of its charitable work, had had different aspects of (in)equality (cultural, social and economic) as overall organising themes for the festival events. Organisational diversity seemed to be less about strict policies, key performance indicators or the likes, that you would find in many conventional workplaces and corporate organisations such as the one I had initially been negotiating with for this project. In Roskilde Festival, however, the organisation of diversity was more a matter of principles, meaning their work in the

area was also not 'well' developed. I say this not as a critique but to share how Roskilde Festival presented itself as an opportunity to discover anew what organisational diversity may be about, since it was not already demarcated in the organisation. There was a genuine possibility for me to both get affected by Roskilde Festival and to be able to affect it back, as, for example, in the development of their first diversity strategy. And here, I found interesting their hesitancy to measure organisational diversity in a quantitative manner and their insistence on the qualitative aspects of organising diversity; for example, the festival experience of volunteers and other participants.

3.4.6 Some notes on my travels between the research contexts

The observant reader will have noticed that the research contexts of articles two, three and four share some similarities. They are not that different from each other even though that might have been assumed from the beginning. In fact, the research context of the first article is the one that stands out from the rest. Article one reflects what I have struggled to leave behind on my research journey. The article reflects my training and background in research that is disentangled from its object of study and disembodied in its reductive analysis of discourse in linguistic terms as communication. This is perhaps why the first article reads as a stepping stone to my conceptualisation of norm critique in the second and third articles. When the first article falls short in terms of grasping what we may call the non-discursive in diversity, the concept of norm critique steps in to offer an embodied more-than-discursive grip on diversity in articles two and three. Taking this step toward theorising diversity as also embodied, however, presented me with another struggle, that of writing affectively in English as a non-native speaker. Writing differently is something that I have practised steadily alongside my PhD project, and this has

resulted in a number of publications (e.g. Dahlmann, Christensen, Burø, forthcoming 2020; Basner et al., 2018).

Articles two to four all draw empirically on organisations that organise for social responsibility. I have shown in the literature review how diversity, in a corporate organisational context, often becomes an add-on and comes second to the principle of surplus maximisation. Diversity is a nice-to-have, not a need-to-have, for such organisations, and only insofar as a business case can be provided for the link between diversity and the for-profit imperative. In Sabaah, however, organisation revolves around diversity. Since Sabaah is non-profit, other organizational principles may come to the fore. The same goes for FIU-Ligestilling and PROSA, which, as labour unions, organise for solidarity among their members. This is probably best exemplified by their main reason for organising: to ensure collective agreements that leave everyone equally well off in terms of rights and remuneration. Roskilde Festival organisation is non-profit (in Danish, *almennyttig*). The annual festival events do, however, generate economic surplus, and this is donated to charitable organisations and causes with public utility and the common good in mind.

4.0 Article overview and contribution

This dissertation is the product of a collection of articles that can be read individually, each on their own. In reading them together, rather than separately, the project emerges, as every article contributes towards bringing answers to the overall research question: *How may organisational diversity be conceptualised norm-critically, and how does said conceptualisation contribute to the study and practice of organising diversity alternatively?* Reading them as independent, stand-alone articles or in combination as a shared project will potentially leave the reader with different impressions. Moreover, the articles may offer insights beyond what I have chosen to highlight for this dissertation. The four articles differ empirically, theoretically and methodologically, but all can be read through my concept of norm critique, as is the case in the overviews presented below. In the subsections that follow, I will outline some of the differences article by article. Simultaneously, I will elaborate on how the articles are connected, according to my cross-reading of them, emphasising how they collectively answer the overall research question by addressing different parts of it.

4.1 OVERVIEW AND CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLE ONE

In this article, I – together with Sara Louise Muhr – apply Lacanian psychoanalytic theory to 45 interviews with leaders across 37 different organisations in Denmark to show, empirically, how diversity is constituted by *lack*. Conceptualising organisational diversity as lack means that it becomes an empty signifier with no corresponding signified, no stable referent that diversity derives its meaning from. This empty form causes the managers to assign particular meanings to diversity in order to make sense of it, whereby diversity is turned from nothing into something

– but not just anything. The fundamental lack establishes diversity as an object elusive to the managers, as that which is excluded from their organisations. If they realise they lack women in management, women are cast as diverse and come to appear as such to the organisation. Women, of course, are no more diverse in or of themselves than men. But women are perceived as diverse *in relation* to a given norm that does not include them – in this case, a male norm.

The implication of diversity as lack can be described with an analogy to the 1999 sci-fi movie *The Matrix*. The film depicts a dystopian future in which humans live in a simulated reality that keeps them from knowing the real world. In 'the spoon scene', waiting for his consultation with the oracle, the film's protagonist, Neo, spots a boy bending a spoon, apparently with the sheer power of thought. The boy hands Neo the spoon, asking him not to try and bend it – for that is impossible, the boy says, even though we a few moments ago witnessed the boy doing just that. Instead, the boy encourages Neo to simply realise the truth: there is no spoon. Then, the boy reassures, Neo will see that it is not the spoon that bends, but Neo himself. Just as with the spoon, it is – following the argument of this article – impossible to bend diversity due to the fundamental lack that turns diversity into nothing in or of itself. That, however, is not the same as saying that diversity is not material to the people whose bodies are marked when diversity is imposed on them. Taking the advice of the boy, if only we realise this paradoxical 'truth' that there is no diversity per se, then we will be able to see that we cannot manage it – we can only manage our selves and our own approaches to diversity.
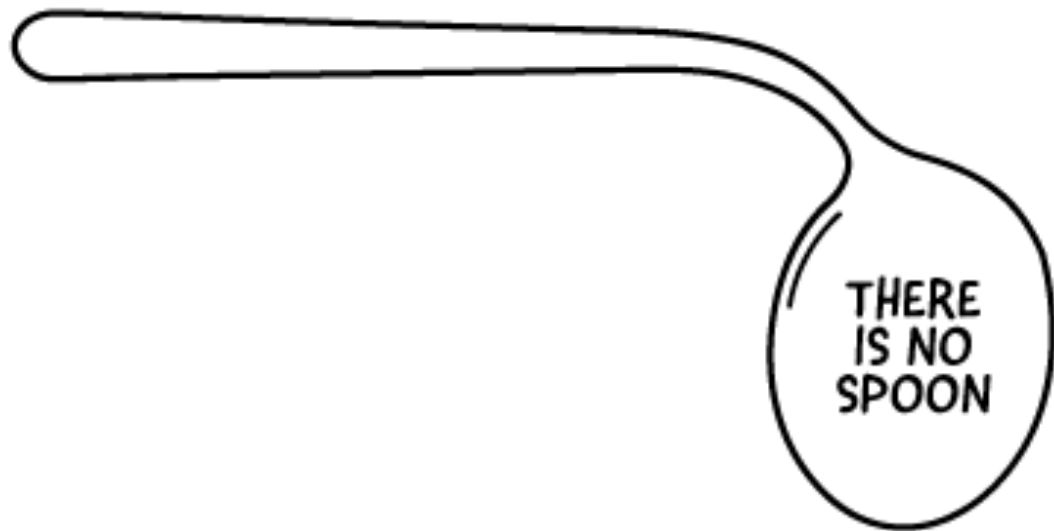
Figure 7: There is no diversity.

In theorising diversity relationally as that which is excluded from the organisational norm, this article contributes towards addressing the first half of the overall research question, that asks how organisational diversity may be conceptualised norm-critically. It fertilises the ground for my conceptualisation of norm critique in the second article because the fundamental lack constituting diversity requires a shift away from a sole focus on perceived difference at the individual and group levels to a focus on organisational norms instead, and how these organise the exclusion of diversity, understood as that which deviates and, thus, does not conform to a given norm. From this understanding, diversity as practice goes from a managerial discourse to also encompass the embodied work of how one inhabits organisational norms.

4.2 OVERVIEW AND CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLE TWO

If nobody is diverse in or of themselves, if diversity is nothing per se, if it is constituted by a lack and understandable only in relational terms, then it makes little sense to work with diversity in an essentialist way at the individual or group levels. In that way, chances are that diversity is *either* pushed into and kept in the margins, as inherently different from the organisational norm, *or* assimilated, whereby difference is erased when people are expected to conform to and thus become the same as the organisational norm. Rather than targeting those who deviate from norms, meaningful diversity work becomes about examining dominant norms for organisational practice as well as in relation to (but not limited to) norms for gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. This effort happens at a structural level to potentially broaden, if not subvert and change, excluding norms through critique in order to include the (groups of) people who inhabit the existing norms differently. In this way, norm critique becomes queer use; that is, the diversity work 'you have to do to open institutions to those for whom they were not intended' (Ahmed, 2019: 211–212). I make use of queer to describe that which becomes noticeable because it is at odds with the norm.

Reading across debates of critical performativity, queer theory and intersectionality, this article conceptualises and introduces norm critique to the field of organisation and management studies, in particular critical management studies. In doing so, it fills in the void that the first article leaves, thereby answering, in part, the first half of the overall research question about how organisational diversity (in this second article, denoted as organisational intersectionality to queer the binary thinking of diversity categories and allow for a more fluid and cross-cutting understanding) can be conceptualised norm-critically. With a performative ontology, norms depend as much on people's repetitions to remain in place as people depend on the norms to

appear as 'viable ones' (Butler, 1993). This means, that norms can and do change. They are not underlying structures, but may very well come to appear as such. It also means that for any change to happen, diversity work needs to be majority-inclusive. I present an exercise from my engagement with two organisations to illustrate the workings of norm critique. Importantly, I show how the exercise shifts focus away from the other and toward the self in order for the majority participants (those who reflect dominant norms) to become reflexively aware of how they relate to certain norms for gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. I end the article by discussing implications for practice, highlighting how norm critique can be mainstreamed to reflect upon whether normative assumptions and expectations are embedded in organisational practices with the risk of causing minority stress.

As mentioned, the article takes inspiration from empirical material generated in collaboration with two organisations, one of which represents members whose bodies are repeatedly marked by diversity discourse, as they are minoritised in relation to norms for gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The other organisation represents a partnership between three major Danish trade unions. Both cases organise norm-critical workshops that I have helped develop and co-facilitate throughout my PhD period. Thus, the data were created through participatory observations and collective reflexivity. The latter was necessary as my active participation in the workshops prevented me from taking notes whilst observing. Notetaking, therefore, took place afterwards when reflecting on the workshops together with my co-facilitators. I have, for this dissertation, chosen to include the original manuscript rather than the published version of the article. Roughly one-third into the final version of the manuscript that was submitted to the publisher is a sentence in red font. I use the sentence as a somewhat banal, yet graphic, example of how, in breaking with the black font used for the rest of the text, the sentence

becomes noticeable. It became an even better example of the workings of norms than I had hoped for. In the published article, the red font was corrected to the default (black) – an illustrative case of the regulative power presented by norms as standards.

4.3 OVERVIEW AND CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLE THREE

> A world has too often been described from the point of view of those who are accommodated. A world might seem open if it was open to you. When we describe the world from the point of view of those not accommodated, a different world appears. […] When doors are closed to some people, they are also closed to our stories, which include our stories about closed doors. (Ahmed, 2019: 220)

According to Ahmed (2017: 135), diversity is both the work of changing institutions and the work that non-conforming bodies do when inhabiting normative spaces differently. In the second article I present norm critique as the former, and in the third article I present it as the latter: how writing from a queer perspective can point to places where privilege clusters. I review literature on social norms in general and in organisation and critical diversity management studies in particular. Just as we talk about sexuality as an orientation, I – with reference to the work of Ahmed (2006) – argue that norm critique is less a method and more an *orientation* in the world, with methodological implications. In addition to projecting norm critique onto an object of study, norm critique in this article is turned inwards and onto the self of the researcher to critically assess on what normative assumptions research is conducted. I take the research question as an illustrative example throughout the article, analysing qualitative data about disclosure and openness among LGBTQ+

(lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) employees at Danish IT workplaces. The data are from a survey I conducted for PROSA (a trade union for IT professionals in Denmark), and include comments made by respondents to the questions in the survey, as well as focus group interviews with LGBTQ+ and non-LGBTQ+ members of PROSA.

I show how a critical analytical attention to norms can nuance perceptions about sexuality in organisations, not least how heterosexuality can become an occupation. As suggested by Ahmed in the quote above, it is a matter of positioning oneself differently in relation to the norm under scrutiny. Through norm-critical analysis, I complicate commonsensical ideas about disclosure and openness automatically leading to inclusion for employees that are minoritised based on their sexuality. At the same time, I complicate the typical explanatory apparatus of homophobia, suggesting instead that the heterosexual respondents' double standards and derogatory language directed at their non-heterosexual counterparts are better viewed as 'selective incivility' (Einarsdóttir, Hoel, & Lewis, 2015), which is not bound by the personal; it is shaped by heteronormativity. I end the article by assessing strengths and weaknesses of norm critique, emphasising the risk of dysfunctional reflexivity (contrary to 'functional stupidity' as set out by Alvesson & Spicer 2012, 2016) as well as discussing the ethics of norm critique. Hence, this third article advances the conceptualisation of norm critique in the second article, showing how it can contribute to the study of organising diversity, thereby providing a partial answer to the latter half of the overall research question.

4.4 OVERVIEW AND CONTRIBUTION OF ARTICLE FOUR

This article gives answers to the latter half of the overall research question about how a norm-critical conceptualisation of organisational diversity contributes to the study and practice of organising diversity alternatively. It does so through the exploration of the norm-critical potential in knowing alternative ways of organising diversity, thereby reinvigorating discussions about the purpose of and possibility for critical engagement with organisation(s). In continuation of articles two and three – which argue for the necessity of applying norm critique onto the self in order not to, unreflexively, replace one set of norms with another – this final article takes seriously the matter of self-critique by showing how easily critical studies become paranoid, with the risk of foreclosing not only alternative understandings but also alternative things to understand. As such, the article examines how we may know an alternative to a dominant organisational norm.
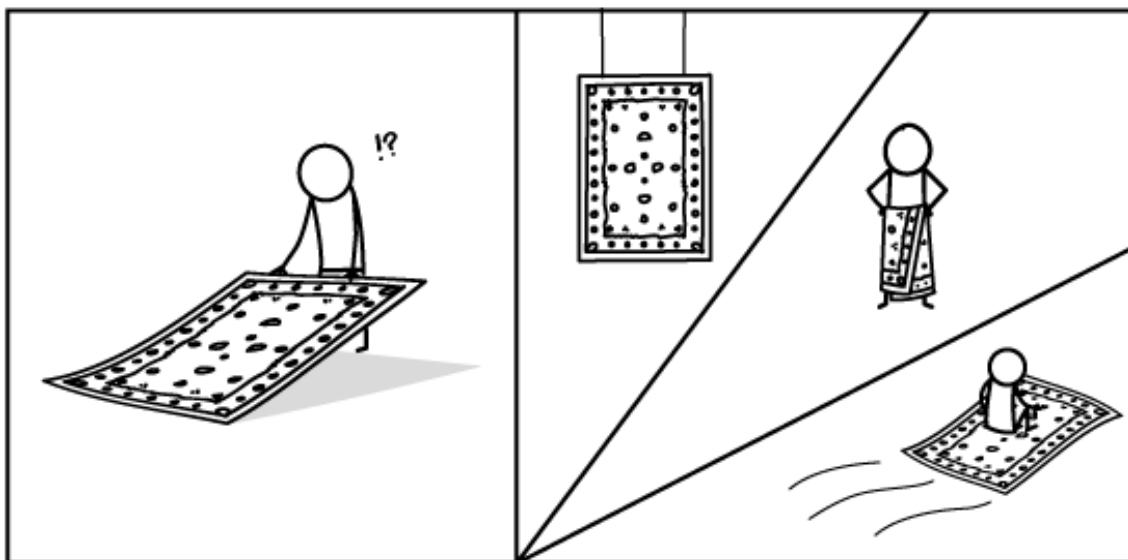
Figure 8: Paranoid reader seeking to uncover what's swept under the carpet vs. reparative readings.

Picking up on the discussion about critical performativity that I introduce in article two, this fourth and final article adds an additional layer by reading recent debates of alternative organisation into said performativity discussion. I argue that whereas critical paranoid inquiry is informed by a hermeneutics of suspicion, another way of seeking, finding and organising knowledge is through Sedgwick's (2002) reparative reading. I propose that such readings may come from a place of wonder, understood both as an affect (positive and negative) and as the dual capacity to affect and to be affected (MacLure, 2013). To build on this proposal, I adopt an affective ethnographic approach to research material from Roskilde Festival. The article concludes with a discussion of what the different embodied analytical strategies produce and what they allow us to do with organisation(s) – an interest at the heart of critical performativity debates.

Due to the limitations imposed by the focus of the fourth article, it does not discuss the analytically emerging alternatives and their relevance to organising diversity. Including the article as part of this dissertation presents me with an opportunity to pick up where the article ended to further explore contributions to norm-critical organisation. This I do in Chapter 9 with the overall conclusion and discussion of my project.

5.0 Article one

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Culture and Organization* on 27 November 2017, available online: https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2017.1407764

To cite this article:

Christensen, Jannick Friis and Sara Louise Muhr (2018) Desired diversity and symptomatic anxiety: theorising failed diversity as Lacanian lack. *Culture and Organization*, 24(2), 114-133.

Please note that the the four articles, this one included, are edited to comply with the style and reference guidelines of their respective journals and that the formatting therefore may differ from that in previous chapters.

Desired diversity and symptomatic anxiety:

theorising failed diversity as Lacanian lack

Abstract

This paper conceptualises organisational diversity as constituted by psychoanalytic lack. Empirically, we show how diversity as Lacanian lack is understood as nothing in or of itself, but as an empty signifier with no signified. The lack of diversity becomes a catalyst for desiring particular ideas of diversity that, however, constantly change due to the empty form of diversity. Anxiety manifests itself in the obsession of unobtainable idealised forms of diversity as well as in the uncertainty associated with the traumatic experience of always falling short of what is desired in an object – the experience of failed diversity. Conclusively, we discuss the productive potential of the power of lack. The impossibility of diversity is what, at once, conditions the possibility of diversity. We therefore suggest that the symptomatic anxiety provoked by the lack should be enjoyed in order to engage with new meaningful desires and fantasies of organisational diversity.

Keywords

5.1 Introduction

Certain groups (e.g. women and ethnic minorities) remain underrepresented in management positions, on boards of directors and in certain occupations[6] (Al Ariss et al. 2012; Al Ariss and Syed 2011; Ashcraft 2013; Benschop et al. 2015; Ghorashi and Sabelis 2013; Zanoni and Janssens 2015). To increase the number of 'minorities', tools and initiatives like sensitivity training, networks, mentoring and 'minority only' programmes have been developed and implemented in many organisations (e.g. Clarke 2011; Holck et al. 2016; Kossek et al. 2006; Özbilgin et al. 2011). Although they are often based on large quantitative studies, most of these practices have not led to the results intended (Hasmath 2012; Holck and Muhr 2017; Kalev et al. 2006; Stahl et al. 2010). They have, instead, provided inadequate – sometimes even counterproductive – guidelines for practitioners (Dover et al. 2016; Ng and Burke 2005; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015), leaving them in a vacuum: knowing they need to do something, but not knowing what to do or what will work. The numbers of women and minorities in managerial positions are, as a result, stagnating in Denmark (which is the empirical context of this present study) as well as in most other so-called Western countries (e.g. Larsen et al. 2015). Management remains mainly white, middle-class, male and heterosexual.

Attempting to explain the ineffectiveness of diversity management practices, critical scholars have recently shown that traditional diversity management practices, as well as studies of these, are guided by functionalistic, generalised, decontextualised and depoliticised HRM practices (Banerjee and Linstead 2001; Janssens and Zanoni

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[6] When considered in a so-called Western context.

2014; Jonsen et al. 2011; Oswick and Noon 2014; Tatli and Özbilgin 2009; Özkazanc-Pan 2008), which do not capture the complexities of the diversity issues that organisations have to deal with. Often taking its point of departure in the methods of critical management studies (Alvesson and Deetz 2000; Alvesson and Wilmott 1992), this criticism has successfully exposed problematic underlying norms and ideological beliefs, which form specific gendered, raced, classed and sexed perceptions – and expectations – of people (e.g. Ahonen et al. 2014; Ashcraft 2013; Cohen and El-Sawad 2007; Janssens and Zanoni 2014; Muhr and Salem 2013; Muhr and Sullivan 2013; Nkomo and Hoobler 2014). Such perceptions are found to obstruct the successful implementation of the very diversity practices that were meant to overcome them (Klarsfeld et al. 2012; Muhr 2011; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015; Tatli 2011).

It was with this critical approach to diversity in mind that one of the authors of this paper embarked on a study of how diversity is understood and managed among 37 Danish organisations that all explicitly work with diversity programmes. While these organisations – due to their explicit focus on diversity as well as their willingness to take part in the study to talk about it – can be assumed to be among the organisations in Denmark with the most knowledge about and experience of diversity management, a curious empirical paradox occurred early on in the study: diversity itself as a concept caused problems. Diversity was idealised as something very specific, yet turned out in practice to be impossible both to define and to evaluate, which made the management of it constantly break down. Consequently, the desired ideal of being a diverse organisation always seemed to collapse, because any absolute definition of diversity always failed. This empirical paradox, combined with the theoretical backdrop of critical diversity management studies, formed the basis of the present paper's research question:

Why is the notion of diversity impossible to define in practice, and how does this character of impossibility influence both the way organisational diversity is attempted managed, and the people who seek to implement it?

At the core of these questions lies a desire for the impossible. Thus, to answer the questions, we turn to Lacanian theory in order to address the psychoanalytic mechanisms that not only determine the impossibility of defining diversity, but simultaneously also create the desire for that which is impossible. More specifically, to capture the simultaneousness of the impossibility of and the desire for diversity, we will theorise diversity as constitutively lacking. Lack, in this regard, derives its meaning from Lacanian psychoanalysis and refers to the void in the concept of diversity itself. We theorise diversity as lack through an organisational reading of Lacan (see e.g. Bicknell and Liefooghe 2010; Böhm and Batta 2010; Driver 2013; Hoedemakers 2010; Johnsen and Guldmand-Høyer 2010; Muhr and Kirkegaard 2013; Wozniak 2010). From this perspective, diversity is characterised not by any given quality or quantity. It is, on the contrary, characterised by emptiness; a constitutive lack that leaves it for others to assign meaning and value to it in order to give it form. Diversity is effectively turned from nothing into something, not unlike the onion metaphor that Lacan (1991, 171) uses to illustrate the successive layers of identification that constitute the subject (see also Verhaeghe 1998). This onion can be peeled, but without ever arriving at any 'true' core or essence. When you are through the ascribed, often socio-demographic attributing layers of meaning, there is simply no diversity left. Thus, the position of this paper is that diversity schemes in organisations are obstructed due to the way in which diversity managers – and mainstream diversity scholars – conceptualise diversity, or rather the way in which they fail to do so. Accordingly, the focal point of the analysis is

how diversity as a concept is created as an ideal, which becomes the very lack that organisational subjects experience.

By investigating the way in which the concept of diversity breaks down, we build on the work of Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015) in particular, but extend this by scrutinising the psychoanalytical dynamics that underlie the processes with which diversity as a concept is constructed and understood around a fundamental lack. The paper's contributions are threefold, as we show 1) how organisational diversity is constructed around a psychoanalytic lack, 2) how the endless desire for diversity produces organisational anxiety as a symptom of that lack, and 3) how it then obstructs (the desired) productive work with diversity. Each contribution is discussed in turn towards the end of the paper, where we – going back to Driver's (2013) notion of the power of lack – discuss the productive powers of diversity as lack and how anxiety can be mobilised to open up for such productivity rather than shut it down. This is the final part of the paper. Ahead of this discussion, we demonstrate all three contributions empirically in the analytical section; however, to do so, we begin with a brief presentation of Lacan's theoretical framework, which we then relate to the critical diversity literature before elaborating on the anxieties associated with our theorising of diversity as lack.

5.2 Theorising diversity as lack

The field of diversity management has long been characterised by a lack of consensus among scholars regarding what constitutes an appropriate framework for managing diversity (e.g. similarity/attraction, decision-making or social categorisation) (Williams and O'Reilly 1998). The incongruence extends to academic debates on applicable data and methods of measuring diversity

management (e.g. lab or naturalistic 'real world' studies) as well as what outcomes to look for when measuring (e.g. process or end results) (Holck et al. 2016). Consequently, there is no definitive answer to what counts as diversity, or to the question of whether diversity at work is an asset or a liability – both seem to be true depending on what study is referenced, jeopardising the operationalisation and generalisability of the concept of diversity in organisations.

This can, according to Lorbiecki and Jack's (2000) analysis of the evolution of diversity management, be explained by the fact that there has been too much focus on the usability and exploitation of diversity, i.e. the business case, in which management becomes the subject, diversity its object and the organisation, although not necessarily intended, the main beneficiary. Or, as Lorbiecki and Jack (2000, 28) succinctly put it: "The belief that diversity management is do-able rests on a fantasy that it is possible to imagine a clean slate on which the memories of privilege and subordination leave no mark." Building on such a view, Zanoni and Janssens (2004) establish how there can be no true understanding of diversity, nor one best practice of it. Thus, there can be no *one* way to accurately manage diversity – whether it is in order to tame or to activate it. A single managerial solution would simply leave out an alternative one and therefore always be a solution following certain premises.

As Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015) show, the distance between an assumed objective concept and the attempt to manage it rationally, and the actual subjective and volatile nature of the concept, makes it incredibly difficult to manage and often creates an inability to act rather than the desired successful harnessing of human differences. Despite good clear managerial intentions, diversity in practice is ever-changing and unstable, and, because of this, it easily slips out of the control of

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managers, leaving the original strategic objectives obsolete or at least with a different outcome than intended (Dover et al. 2016; Ng and Burke 2005). The inability to understand and comprehend diversity seems, however, to lead managers to 'mismanage' diversity (Knights and Omanovic 2016) in what appears like an eternal hunt for a precise, as in fully exhaustive, definition of diversity – one that would lead them to the desired successful harvesting of the benefits of organisational diversity. However, the problem that occurs is that since diversity is ever-changing, socially constructed and thereby in a sense an empty concept, the hunt for the 'right' combination of differences is doomed to remain an illusion – a 'phantasmagoria' in the words of Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015). Any attempt at controlling for diversity attributes is in this regard in vain, because these attributes are, if anything, changeable and unreliable and for the same reason inapplicable as controllable entities. Consequently – and quite ironically – diversity becomes a concept that dissolves, but remains imagined and desired nonetheless.

As such, this development lays the ground for our theorisation of diversity as lack, in which we mobilise Lacanian psychoanalysis in order to explain what happens when a concept like diversity is empty of signifiers, but remains imagined and desired as if it did contain signifiers nonetheless (e.g. Jones and Spicer 2005). The premise for conceptualising diversity as no more (and no less) than a psychoanalytic lack is the Lacanian 'triad', consisting of the three registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, which broadly correspond to discourse, identification and failure respectively (Hoedemaekers and Keegan 2010). The meaning of diversity is found in the relationship of signifiers that make up the field of discourse, i.e. the Symbolic order. The unconscious, however, remains radically exterior to us, since it exists in language, insofar as we are not aware of its structuring effects. Hence,

diversity is something that escapes us. This 'something' can thus be investigated through a Lacanian lens of unconscious determinations in organisational settings.

In the Symbolic world of an organisation, the subject is never anything other than a function of language (Arnaud 2002). In this world of signifiers, humans are structured by discourse as an external agency. The unconscious is an effect of the signifying chains that make up language. Put differently: the unconscious is the discourse of the big Other (Arnaud and Vanheule 2007), or, in Lacan's (2006, 690) own words: "Man's desire is the Other's desire." In *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), Žižek pushes this understanding of being a subject of the Symbolic to its extreme:

> Today, it is commonplace that the Lacanian subject is divided, crossed-out, identical to a lack in a signifying chain. However, the most radical dimension of Lacanian theory lies not in recognising this fact but in realising that the big Other, the symbolic order itself, is also *barré*, crossed-out, by a fundamental impossibility, structured around an impossible/traumatic kernel, around a central lack (Žižek 1989, 137).

What Žižek is arguing is that subjects of language are constitutively split. They will never be whole, since there is always something missing. That lack gives birth to an insatiable desire, not for more, but for something else, something different. The lack, in other words, functions as a catalyst for an endless quest for identification (Laustsen 2005), as the insatiability of the lack initiates an ongoing transition from one signifier to another.

Diversity as the object of an organisation is thus never desired in itself. The object-cause of desire – the *objet petit a* – is what is *more* in an object than the object itself (Cederström and Spicer 2014). If an organisation were to obtain this unobtainable object, it would simply turn into something else, as "what desire desires is desire itself" (Jones and Spicer 2005, 237): the very process of desiring something, meaning that that something is really nothing, since it is contingent and can thus be anything. According to Žižek (1997, 39), this Lacanian formula tells us that the raison d'être of desire is not to realise its goal, to find full satisfaction, but rather to "reproduce itself as desire". It is therefore the very process of working towards a goal of becoming ever more diverse that is desired and not diversity itself. Once that goal is reached, the desire is redirected towards an-Other goal. The empirical significations of diversity presented in this study should therefore be understood not as desire per se but as *semblances* of desire. Theoretically, desire remains the same, namely the *objet petit a* – that is, the object-cause of desire – meaning desire is elusive to the organisational subjects. The same is true of the semblances of desire. They, too, remain elusive to the desiring subject. Yet, the semblances of desire can – and are – signified empirically and may as such have the appearance of the *objet petit a* without ever being identical to it.

Žižek (1989) adds that it is not only your desire that is the Other's desire; the Other's desire is also that of the Other. The practical implication of this is that you can never ask what is desired of you, because the Other would simply not know. The Other is not even anyone, but a system of knowledge (possibly reflected in/by someone), which is also part of the reason why we can scale up an otherwise clinical and individual-oriented psychoanalytic practice to a macro level. Psychoanalysis is already an analysis of the social in that the unconscious is shared collectively, given

that the Other is also desiring the Other's desire due to its own lacking essence. A psychoanalytic interpretation of conscious phenomena would therefore be to view them as concealed expressions of the unconscious (Gabriel and Carr 2002; Jalan et al. 2014).

One way in which anxiety arises due to the lack in diversity is related to the Imaginary. This is not what is imagined, but how we are constituted through others' images of us (Jones and Spicer 2005), so the Other's recognition comes to hold power over us, and how we see and shape our selves in accordance with these images due to our lacking identities. The images, or fantasies, teach us how to desire to become whole in conscious efforts to cover up for the unconscious lack (Driver 2009). Fantasy, as Lacan (2006, 532) writes, "is the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object". The image, that is equal to our selves, is thus mediated by the gaze of the Other, which then becomes the guarantor of our selves (Homer 2005, 22–26). Lacking diversity is an anxious position to be in when diversity, as an object of desire, holds promises of becoming whole by filling in the constitutive lack that causes desire. Anxiety can for the same reason also relate to failed organisational diversity, which can be explained by means of the Real.

The Real is not to be confused with social reality, but is rather that part of social reality that we can never truly understand, grasp or explain. It is that which is forever cut off from symbolisation (Catlaw 2006) – that which drives us, but can never be totally understood, because the Real is the precise point at which the signifying chain fails (Hoedemaerkers and Keegan 2010). The Real is as such the theoretical

explanation as to why diversity can be conceptualised as lack – and why it only makes sense to approach diversity as such. For the Real renders real the limits to representation, as its empty form is what prevents the discursive Symbolic from reaching any closure and from becoming identical with itself (Cederström and Spicer 2014). In summary: the Real is the very unknown at the edge of our socio-symbolic universe (Homer 2005, 81).

The Real is therefore the limit of not only the Symbolic, but also the Imaginary – that is, the limitation to both discourse and to identification. The Real not only complicates our understanding and systematisation of the world; it also obscures the way we give substance to our self-understanding within this world. The Real is that which is 'more' in the Symbolic and the Imaginary than what they are in themselves and is for that reason beyond our comprehension. The implication is that we are speaking of something that is unspeakable, and the importance of the Real to this paper lies exactly with this quality of impossibility. The Real can never be absorbed into the Symbolic, because it is that extra that we can sense, but don't have the language for. Not having (proper) words for it means that any encounter with the Real would be an anxious experience, because the Real denies symbolisation and hence exists outside the language that we have at our disposal to make sense of the world. But it is the impossibility of the Real that makes it possible for us to take into account Lacan's notion of enjoyment – the experience of *jouissance* that the interviewees have in the absence of tangible results of organisational diversity.

5.2.1 Back to diversity

Extending the extant critical literature as presented above, we will argue that diversity is nothing in and of itself. Schwabenland and Tomlinson (2015) capture

this vantage point when describing diversity as a phantasmagoria: confusing, strange, almost dreamlike, because it always seems to change in odd ways. Diversity is in that sense not manageable, because the lack, the very non-essence at the non-existing 'core' of the notion, produces numerous empirical paradoxes. In the context of this paper, we characterise paradox along a Derridarian aporia (Derrida 1993; see e.g. also 2000; 2005 on hospitality), where diversity is diversity because it at the same time is *not* diversity. The impossibility of diversity is what, at once, conditions the possibility of diversity. What we have come to realise through years of preoccupation with organisational diversity is that diversity in contemporary organisations has become a 'lost' object-cause of desire that management wants to (re)conquer in order to become whole. The workforce is, as a result, always-already not diverse enough. By 'lost' we do not want to imply that organisations were at some point in possession of the diversity they are now searching for and that they can somehow reclaim it, but simply that the object of diversity is – to them – missing and always will be due to the elusiveness of the concept, prompted by the lack.

The lack in diversity makes the notion volatile. It is, if anything, contingent, characterised only – in a Lacanian sense – by an antagonistic kernel, which to us represents the very power relations that mainstream diversity management is criticised for neglecting. What we get depends on how we make sense of it, how we assign meaning to diversity and not least who gets to claim hegemony to otherwise contested ideas of diversity. That insight calls for significant changes to how diversity is 'managed' in contemporary organisations. If we realise the paradoxical 'truth' that there is no diversity per se, then we will start seeing that we cannot manage it – we can only manage *our* selves and our own approaches to diversity.

5.3 Anxiety as the symptom of lacking diversity

If Lacanian lack is the psychoanalytic diagnosis of failed diversity as a problem, anxiety becomes a symptom of that problem. The symptomatic anxiety that emerges as a product of the lack in diversity is ambiguous, as it stems from the constant dissolvement of the concept, but also from the fact that the lack can no longer be desired, should a desired form of diversity ever be achieved – hence, the coupling of anxiety and lack. We cannot *not* lack diversity. That would be the equivalent of symbolic completeness, which would deny us our desire(s) and leave us with the only option left: the anxious position of always falling short of what we desire in order to keep desiring and cover up the lack.

As Dickson (2011, 320) argues, anxiety in relation to "symbolic completeness" is experienced when lack itself is lacking, i.e. the anxious subject position – granted by the Other – of lacking lack, thereby being cut off from desire as well as from *jouissance*. The lack in organisational diversity, as will be exemplified in the analysis, creates such anxiety because the *jouissance* of 'juggling differences' in the organisations represented turns out not to be what is desired at all. The categorical (re)presentations of diversity are semblances of desire, i.e. sequential significations of difference with no consistently corresponding signified. So each signifier resembles something signified, but there is no consistency to the signified diversity, which as a result becomes formless. The interviewees are, consequently, left with a feeling of emptiness while chasing new answers to their diversity dilemmas. When introducing the concept of diversity, the organisations simultaneously introduce a lack and hence a desire too. The fantasy of becoming ever more diverse fills in the symbolic space that is the desire, meaning that semblance of desire for diversity, paradoxically, becomes the symbolic solution to restoring the lack that it itself causes. Simultaneously, we may view the semblance of desire for particular forms

of diversity as a symbolic death drive, because if we ever were to enjoy what we desire, this distinctive side to diversity can no longer be desired. With a nod to our Derridarian conception of paradox, we can boil down the theoretical insights to the following statement: diversity is what it is not.

5.4 Methodology

The empirical material for this paper consists of interviews conducted in 37 organisations in Denmark. It was initiated as an open-ended study about diversity work among Danish organisations that had signed the Charter for More Women in Management. The charter was an initiative introduced by the minister for equality. By signing the charter, which was done voluntarily, the organisations committed themselves to submitting to the ministry an annual baseline report that addressed the current status of women in management positions, the goals for increasing that number and how those goals should be reached. Of the 110 organisations that signed this charter (Kvinder i Ledelse 2013), 37 volunteered to be part of the study by granting us one or two interviews with top management. Since they volunteered, one could assume that these 37 organisations were also the ones with the best results. However, very few organisations had seen any real results from their initiatives, and in some the CEO/HR director could not even remember having signed the charter.

5.4.1 Data collection

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to get an insight into concrete experiences and motivational factors, i.e. personal stories and narratives (e.g. Czarniawska 2000) of the interviewee, rather than getting knowledge about the structures and programmes in the organisation. To access these personal accounts,

the interview style was open and structured only minimally following the assertion that opinions and underlying norms surface more easily in a conversation if the respondents are allowed to articulate the issues they find relevant (e.g. Kvale 1996). For that reason, the interviewer did not follow an interview guide with an exhaustive list of predefined questions. Rather, the principal task of the interviewer was to demonstrate the ability to ask about the issues that became topical. Each interview therefore started out with a general question about the background and previous career steps of the interviewee. Despite the open format, the interviewer was still tasked with guiding the respondent through the following themes: 1) personal information, including background, leadership style, competences, work–life balance, values and attitude towards diversity; and 2) company-specific information, including talent management, diversity schemes/programmes, employee development, organisational culture, subcultures and values.

We conducted 1–2 interviews in each of the 37 organisations – 45 interviews in total. The interviewees were all top managers, and for almost half of the organisations, one respondent was the administrative director/CEO. When possible, both a man and a woman were interviewed. In total 23 men and 22 women were interviewed. The interviews lasted between 1 and 2.5 hours. All interviews (with the exception of four that, for logistical reasons, were conducted over the phone) were conducted personally at the office of the respondent or in a meeting room and were recorded and transcribed. For the purposes of anonymity, none of the extracts that are used in the analysis mention any names. Only gender and, in certain instances where relevant, the type of organisation are stated in the quotes. The citations have been edited for empty words, spoken language and detached clauses, but otherwise appear in full, as expressed by the interviewees.

5.4.2 Data analysis

As all interviews had the Charter for More Women in Management as their common denominator, gender diversity was naturally cast as central to the discussion. However, the interviews were not solely about gender diversity, but about diversity more generally. Gender diversity – along with ethnic diversity – is the typical contextual translation of diversity in Denmark. The former is likely to be associated with women's access to top management (Romani et al. 2016), whereas the latter was adopted due to perceived integration needs as a direct response to recent immigration waves (Holck and Muhr 2017). In our case, as the conversation matured, the specific gender focus was replaced by a broader and more general discussion about diversity.

Following the idea of El-Sawad et al. (2004) about contradictive 'doublethink', where mutually exclusive understandings of diversity seem to apply at the same time as unconscious processes, we initially grouped all excerpts in which the interviewees were struggling to come to terms with the ontology of diversity in their respective organisations. Thus, in our first-level coding, we were sensitive towards moments of self-contradiction and the emergence of paradoxes. These were then, as part of the second-level coding, grouped and regrouped into categories that in different, yet related, ways all pointed in the direction of a lacking, i.e. incomplete, conceptualisation of diversity. The structure of the analysis reflects these coded categories for lack. The subsequent discussion problematises the symptomatic presence of anxiety as a consequence of the lack in diversity. The psychoanalytic diagnosis of diversity as lack means that the interviewees in this study, as we shall see, fall short of their dreams of organisational diversity. One type of anxiety was not caught on tape, but was revealed when the recorder was turned off, as several interviewees expressed relief that the interview had come to an end. They had been

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anxious for the entire duration of the interview that they were to be corrected in their opinions about and approaches to diversity issues.

5.5. Failed diversity: An analysis

While these overt expressions of anxiety were heuristic to our approach to and understanding of the data, the contribution of this paper lies with a more tacit form of anxiety that is linked with lacking tangible results due to failing diversity programmes. With 'tacit' we want to distinguish this Lacanian form of anxiety from the example mentioned above, which could be coded as a somewhat 'common-sense' manifestation of anxiety due to its apparent expression. Hence, organisational anxiety as presented in this analysis is to be viewed as a symptom of the lack in diversity and not as a product of what is actually done. The point is that this distinct form of anxiety is the emotional expression of experiencing first-hand that out of something (i.e. signing the charter) comes nothing, or at least not necessarily what was desired in the first place. The anxiety instantiates the organisations' failed diversity management practices. The companies that took part in the study generally experienced a lack of results from their gender diversity programmes. As expressed by one of our interviewees:

> I've been responsible for the company's work on diversity and equality for many years and the state of affairs is that not much has changed. In fact, nothing's happened.

Despite good intentions backed up by concrete efforts and allocation of resources for the promotion of organisational diversity, very few organisations experience

results from their diversity efforts. Still, for most of the organisations, diversity management remains high on the agenda:

> It's important to address diversity for several reasons. First, if you believe that your company has a social responsibility, which we do, then I think you ought to reflect the society we live in. There has to be room for, and a fair treatment of, all of us, no matter who we are. Second come all the advantages in making room for diversity, as we may need to attract certain competences and bring out the best in our employees. And they become much better at their job if they can just be who they are.

Diversity becomes a question of ensuring that the organisation does not work against people who are supposed to have this specificity. In other words, diversity is also about avoiding the fact that people are discriminated against on the grounds of their perceived differences. It is, for the same reason, impossible to reap the fruits of the work, as the criterion for success necessarily must be to have prevented something from happening. Paradoxically, it seems, the only way to make the results known would be to discontinue the efforts. Quite ironically, the tangible results reveal themselves only the moment we cease to produce any, and even then, there is no way of knowing the causality – which effect produces what outcome, or what outcome has which effect.

The combination of perceiving diversity as important and not seeing any results leaves the organisations in a sort of vacuum. This vacuum, we argue, is constructed not only from the fact that they see little results, but also by the fact that they do not

really know how to define what it is they desire results from. It is therefore not only organisational diversity programmes that collapse, but also the very idea and definition of diversity. Still, since this is a political agenda, and as such is likely to present itself as a desirable agenda too, diversity remains topical even though the results seem to slip through the fingers of the interviewees. This is not to suggest that desirability automatically follows the political, but simply to acknowledge that subjects may experience a political issue as a desire of the Other. In the remainder of the analysis, we argue that in order to understand the lack of results, we first need to focus on what results are desired, i.e. the signified semblance of desire and how this construction influences the possibilities for the organisations to manage diversity. Thus, we take a step back and focus on how the organisations construct the diversity they desire, how they make sense of not achieving the desired results, why and how they keep desiring diversity as an organisational goal, and what this means for their ability to actually manage diversity.

In order to show the many and multifaceted ways in which diversity emerges as a psychoanalytic lack, we have structured the analysis around five subsections, each forming a part of our argument that the lack in diversity leads to organisational anxiety, as discussed in the continuation of the analysis. The respective analytical subsections address 1) the struggle to make diversity about demography and hence the innumerable measures that may count as diversity and 2) how diversity therefore comes to depend on the meaning assigned to it by the respondents. We then 3) go from women in management to diversity, and back again, to show 4) the disappearance of diversity as well as 5) a desire–diversity incongruity, before moving on to a discussion of how diversity may attract the attention of management even without any ontological backing due to it representing nothing more than a psychoanalytic lack. Put differently, diversity is the cause *and* the object of

organisational desires and therefore also the possibility *and* the limitation to *jouissance* and the related experiences of anxiety.

5.5.1 The struggle to make diversity about demography

Although diversity is desired, it is for most interviewees very difficult to explain what 'kind of' diversity they are looking for. One reason for this is the difficulty around explaining how different people should be in order to compose the 'right' mix of diversity. One example is the one below from a director in a ministry. Prior to the extract in the quote, he has stressed how they, in his ministry, are always on the lookout for young talented people who can think differently and out of the box. He struggles, however, to explain how different they ideally should (or are allowed to) be:

> It's not like you're not allowed to have your own professional opinion, but it's best if you say the right things. You should not start sounding too much like an NGO representative during a meeting with the minister. Well, the ministry has room for differences, but it's [swearing] difficult, because it disturbs our otherwise systematic way of working. My point is, if you're a real prima donna and think your opinion is better than that of others, then you're not material for a ministry that's very hierarchical.

Thus, although they are looking for people with different mindsets, these people should not be too independent. Nor should they be too diverse in their mindset, as the ministry still needs people to align themselves and respect formal hierarchies. Note how diversity becomes conformity, because the ministry in question only

welcomes diversity as long as it does not challenge current organisational functioning. As another respondent expresses it:

> As I see it, we'd like to be more international, but with a Danish mindset.

In other words, we should be different, but all think alike. Heterodoxy in professional opinion is thought to pose a threat to the systemic forms of conduct in the organisation and is thus appreciated only when it is the 'right' form of heterodoxy. Diversity is therefore assimilated into being diverse on the organisation's premises. However, the problem here is that the premises are not known, and the 'right' form of diversity is therefore doomed to be something that one can only have an idea about, but never fulfil: a lack. Moreover, the understanding of diversity as a set of different opinions waters down the idea of what comes to count as diverse, perhaps best illustrated in a follow-up comment from the same interviewee when describing his work team:

> The best part is that we're a team of Danes and other people from Scandinavia and then one Spaniard just for the sake of diversity.

Thus, even though he spends a lot of time explaining how important diversity is, because he cannot seem to define it in any absolute sense (as the quote above shows), he ends up making a joke about how diversity in reality is that they have employed one "Spaniard". The conceptual precision in diversity is watered down.

Because of this need to have concrete parameters for diversity (to not see it dilute and disappear), many respondents end up seeking help in 'popular' diversity categories, such as gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability, when going from general talk about how important diversity is to actually explaining what it is and how they manage it in their organisation.

> To cover the full range of diversity, we've tried to come up with a lot of descriptive words for it and came to the conclusion that what's important to us is to have young as well as older employees, different nationalities, and both women and men.

Another respondent easily points out gender, age and ethnicity as – using his words – the "typical three diversity aspects". He, however, "cannot decide if disabled should be included too".

No matter how diversity is defined, however, it is important for the respondents that it is understood as a way of thinking and as bringing different competencies to the table. It is in this sense explicitly linked to the business-case argument for diversity. It needs to be linked to value:

> I've taken chances and hired new employees who had slightly different profiles compared to previous candidates. This approach has brought valuable diversity to the team and goes beyond gender, as it also considers industrial and educational backgrounds, nationality, and so on.

Because the focus is on value, and this cannot be linked directly to the diversity categories, diversity comes to mean anything and therefore nothing, as further exemplified in another response:

> We're a very diverse organisation. We have both skilled and non-skilled workers, clerks, lawyers, biologists, engineers, academics, and people with a more technical background. We have a very broad spectrum of people on different collective agreements represented here.

When asked why he finds it important for the organisation to be diverse, he adds that it is "not solely about gender balance, but more a question of having access to the right set of competences".

So, in an attempt to become ever more diversified, the organisations add ever more attributes and can, in theory, present infinite dimensions that may count as diversity. The criterion for what is judged as diverse is getting so broad that basically anything is about diversity. But if everything is diverse, then is anything really diverse at all? The lack that the diversity focus installs in the organisations also gives birth to a desire for obtaining diversity. What diversity is, however, depends on how the respondents fantasise about diversity, as these fantasies teach them how to desire. Once a certain aspect of diversity is perceived as realised – as in the case of having more women in management – the interviewees get the sensation that that was not it; there has to be more to diversity than just women or, to give another example, the ethnic composition of the workforce. Consequently, the respondents never get

to enjoy diversity in full and thus find themselves in an anxious position where their anxiousness grows as they – in the words of Dickson (2011, 321, italics in original) – "are constantly let down by the *jouissance*", since it is never satisfying. The implication is that the respondents are cheated *not* of their *jouissance*, but of what they assume the *jouissance* signifies. The lack of diversity is thereby exposed, and to cover up this lack, more and more layers of diversity are added, which is a form of conceptual stretching that dilutes the understanding of the phenomenon.

5.5.2 Diversity therefore depends

Because of this difficulty in labelling diversity – and at the same time also what seems like a very strong need for such a label – there is, in theory, but also empirically, it seems, no limit to what socio-demographic attributes may fall under the diversity umbrella. Which variables may count are limited only by imagination – or fantasy, to be more precise. Yet, the radical contingency of social categories allows for some 'differences' to be more visible than others. These visible diversity markers, e.g. man/woman, are, due to their visibility, more likely to be chosen as indicators of diversity, as is also evident in our data set:

> When I think about diversity in management, I have a broader focus in mind than gender balance between men and women. But it's just the easiest thing to spot.

As the sex ratio in an organisation gets ever more balanced, other parameters will, in the place of gender, offer themselves as viable means for defining differences between organisational subjects. If diversity is a question of having an equal number

of men and women throughout the organisation, then a gender-balanced workforce will present itself as symbolic completeness, which in return will put the subject in the anxious position of lacking lack – the very catalyst for the semblance of desire. The point being that if the organisation were to achieve an equal representation of women and men, the next thing appears as the object of desire, as a semblance of desire. So desire as it were remains the same, the elusive object-cause of desire, whereas semblances of desire –while also elusive – are different in the sense that they can be signified. This precarious situation of lacking lack, as we shall see, is avoided by turning diversity into something else, into a different semblance of desire. Thus, what gets to constitute diversity depends. We can for that reason never be diverse in any absolute sense of the word; it is a continuous effort and perhaps for that reason better described as something one does, not something one is, since diversity becomes the very unconscious process of desiring the *objet petit a*. This is illustrated in the following scenario:

> It was the first time that I was part of a team where it was almost 50/50 between men and women. I can remember that at some point I had to hire a couple of new employees, and at first I hired a man, because he was best qualified. But next I found myself in a situation where I had two candidates – a man and a woman – and both were equally qualified, so I ended up employing the woman because she would help maintain the diversity.

The arbitrariness of the diversity concept becomes even clearer when, later on, the same interviewee talks about how they report on diversity in his organisation: by counting the number of women overall, and women in management in particular.

We are sometimes accused of being too homogenous. That's just not the case. We are, in fact, a very diverse company because [company name] as a workplace has two very different professional groups represented. And if we take a closer look at the one pillar, then women make up roughly 50 per cent of our staff. We've also got a rather large share of women managers in this part of the organisation. I totally get that we're not doing quite as well if we zoom in on the other professional pillar. But sometimes you just have to see the full picture.

The full picture, of course, being the first pillar only, according to the interviewee, since this pillar alone represents the diversity picture that he refers to. This ambiguity in diversity as a concept furthermore drives him to benchmark his organisation, which is a public institution, against private companies that appear to enjoy exactly the kind of diversity that he does not.

You have to keep in mind that when accounting for the number of women in management, we've got quite a challenge as regards how we define management. Our managers are defined as the head of sections. But you have an entirely different management structure in many private companies, and if we were to copy that structure, the number of women with management responsibilities in our organisation would automatically go up.

Private companies, not having to comply with the formal bureaucratic structures of public institutions, thus emerge as an Other that appears to rob the interviewee of his *jouissance*, given that the Other is always ascribed with possessing the *objet*

petit a – as is also evident in the quote where the private companies are thought to enjoy a greater number of women in management and hence are found to be more diverse for that reason. The respondent's perception of the Other forms a negative ideal, which he and the organisation he represents are excluded from. The ideal, however, presents an unpleasant reality nonetheless, because the private companies seem to enjoy it at the cost of the interviewee. That diversity, in other words, keeps the interviewee in a lacking position where he may never obtain the kind of diversity that is the cause of his desire. For if he did, the notion of diversity would simply change, which we now elaborate further.

5.5.3 From women in management to diversity – and back again

While the interviewee in the quote above seems aware of the contingency in diversity – that its meaning and what it signifies varies and may change depending on context – she fails to realise her own role in making this change. If desiring a certain form of diversity, one easily risks – in the quest to obtain this object-cause of desire – making that particular form of diversity part of the socio-ideological world that shapes the corporate reality. As we shall see in the following quotes, this process of making sense of diversity tends to determine what comes to represent diversity and, more importantly, what is not signified in the term.

> The reason why we're working with diversity and more women in management is that we need to attract the best managers. That's the overall agenda and how we should talk about diversity. It would be wrong to say that we need more equality and for that reason need to have some more women on board. That's not the right message for our company. The right message would be that we want the best managers in order for us to meet our business

targets. And when that is the case, it only makes sense to source talent from either sex, because the skills we are looking for are equally distributed among men and women.

Women are in this quote paradoxically cast as non-diverse (diversity *and* more women) while being the only diversity focus of the company. The political construction of diversity becomes even clearer when another interviewee explains how they are currently, in her company, discussing whether to include women in management in their diversity focus or if the lack of women managers should be an issue of its own. "The one does not exclude the other", as the interviewee remarks. Still, women come to embody diversity in the organisation – a process that gives birth to certain feelings of anxiety among men, who may roam unnoticed, yet come to constitute the counterparty to a diverse organisation. Consequently, an illusion of reversed discrimination may also roam freely, because men come to realise that they in their embodiment of the 'wrong' gender are no longer the *objet petit a*. Men's desire, like everybody else's desire, is, however, desire itself, meaning all they desire is to be desired by the big Other, which in this case would be the organisation they work for, as is illustrated in the next quote, where some men oppose a women-only approach to diversity.

> When I was in charge of diversity and equality, we now and then succeeded in providing training for groups of women. But this practice was very rare. I think we did it twice and were in both instances told to stop even before we had started, because a lot of men got angry about us granting women special treatment.

Women of the Danish private and public companies represented in this study therefore, in many cases, come to denote diversity. And diversity, as a result, signifies women. The interest that these organisations take in diversity rests on a dichotomous premise where being male is the norm, against which women appear as exotic, different and diverse beings. The inclusion of more women in management positions in that regard comes down to a question of 'otherness', i.e. of diversity as difference being valued over 'more of the same', as eloquently expressed by one of the interviewees when she states that they "do not want too many Huey, Dewey and Louies"[7] in her organisation. Another interviewee puts it this way:

> A few years back we actually shifted our focus from more women in management to diversity, because the agenda of having more women in management has kind of expired. What we wish to achieve with more women in management is really equal opportunities for all. If we had that, we would also automatically see more women in management positions as well as more ethnic minorities, people with a different sexual orientation, and so on. That is also why I reacted when you [the interviewer] mentioned women's

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[7] The 'Huey, Dewey and Louie effect' (in Danish *Rip, Rap og Rup-effekten*) is a common phrase used in Denmark to denote the tendency among (male) leaders to hire people similar to themselves, especially for management positions, to the detriment of women, who remain underrepresented (see e.g. the Danish online dictionary: http://ordnet.dk/ddo/ordbog?query=Rip-Rap-Rup-effekt).

breakfast … we have sort of overcome that approach and are now more into the world of diversity, right?

Women in management are, if taking the statement above at face value, just one of many symbolic expressions of diversity. Interestingly, however, the interviewee discloses his uncertainty as to whether diversity – as the new focal point of the organisation – can encompass women in management too. When exploring the dynamics of identification with Lacan, a phrase such as 'right', as seen at the very end of the quote, becomes a moment in which the interviewee calls for the interviewer as the Other to, in this case, confirm the answer given (Hoedemaekers 2010). Since the respondent's desire is the Other's desire, he simply does not know if his object-cause of desire is to have more women in management positions or merely more diversity per se. Of course, the Other would not know either, since the Other's desire is also that of the Other. That is to say, the Other is not another subject that one can demand answers from, but is to be understood as the Symbolic order of language as discourse, where the unconscious is found. Therefore, another plausible interpretation of the term 'right' could be that the interviewee is unconsciously agreeing with himself, as the question mark changes to an exclamation mark. No matter what, the object-cause of desire remains elusive to the interviewee. The semblance of desire expressed in the quote is elusive too, but can, as is evident from the quote, be signified as women in management or ethnic minorities or different sexual orientations.

5.5.4 The disappearance of diversity

Exactly what is desired in diversity is, as we have shown in our examples so far, an empirical question, and the lack in diversity – the fact that diversity becomes an

empty signifier with no signified – allows our interviewees to mould it in accordance with their fantasies of having either more women in management; *or* more ethnic minorities; *or* different educational backgrounds, skills and competences; *or* a bit of everything. A Lacanian reading of diversity turns the concept into a capitalised Signifier by which we deduce that diversity, as a Signifier, denotes not 'its' signified, but another Signifier (Lacan 2006, 412–419). In other words, there is a barrier to meaning, a division that will not allow our interviewees – or us as researchers for that matter – to arrive at any fixed or stable signification, hence diversity as lack. Moreover, the "retroactive character of the effect of signification with respect to the signifier" (Žižek 1989, 112) tells us that the effect of meaning is always produced backwards. By this we understand that determination of meaning happens retroactively. The implication of this insight is that there is no diversity per se. What gives substance to diversity is the interviewees' continuous effort to, for instance, have more women leaders, in which case diversity becomes all about that particular effort.

Therefore, the way in which diversity disappears is when the concept is created as an ideal that the organisations lack, which is also why the interviewees' semblances of desire can be directed towards diversity that, as the *objet petit a*, remains unobtainable. If having more women managers is the ideal, it is also what is currently lacking. So to include and make room for diverse ways of being, the organisations initially exclude diversity as being different. Diversity is thus marginalised as being inherently different, and it is essentialised – that is, made innate through socio-demographic categories such as 'women'. It is as such a suspension that exposes belonging, as fleshed out in the following quote, where the interviewee relies on the man/woman binary to make sense of diversity as

difference, since she would otherwise have to acknowledge that diversity is nothing in or of itself:

> Men and women are different. It's as simple as that. And we do things in different ways. That you can see when making decisions. When I talk to other women about this, it's a common feature that men come to a decision faster than women do. Let's take recruitment as an example: men already know what type of employee they want. They have a quick look at the field of applicants, decide which one they want, and then they choose him. Whereas my experience with women is that they perhaps are a little more thorough in the preparation phase; they consult the people who will work with the new employee and perhaps even have them join the interview as well as the decision-making process. Those are two very different ways of hiring. And they are, as I see it, related to gender.

What happens in the quote above, however, is that women's differences become alike. Women as a group are expected all to be the same. A paradox, which also presents itself when another interviewee talks about equality and diversity without making any distinction between the two:

> So I worked with equality and diversity and a whole lot else. That year we had a few cases that caught the interest of the media. One was about ethnic minorities. Another one was about our internal investigation of offensive behaviour towards women. God knows the report didn't show the best results, but we were prepared and got the right media coverage.

Equality and diversity seem to go hand in hand, meaning diversity can signify both difference *and* sameness at the same time. Moreover, in the quote we also learn how diversity can take the form of a facade or even a masquerade to present a certain image, in this case to the media. The mask that the organisation wears when confronted with diversity issues is, in other words, false pretence, because if we were to search for the secret behind the mask we would find none – or at least a different story than the one told in the press.

In a Lacanian perspective, this image of diversity is the very organisation-ideal that the organisation strives towards, meaning it is not 'there' but merely a desired place to be; the point at which one allegedly will become whole. The following quote, which is from a representative of a trade union, highlights the importance of diversity as a desired ideal.

> Previously we had campaigns against nuclear power, against the war in Vietnam, or to boycott South African products due to apartheid. Now we're running campaigns for women in management and against discrimination. It's a question of values. I believe that diversity will bring about a better world, but that we don't know for sure. So we just have to believe in it as a core value.

The trade union, as a value-/interest organisation, is dependent on its own construction of diversity as an ideal, without which it would be lacking lack and thereby also desire. The organisation-ideal, in the meantime, installs a lack and sets

in motion the desire for diversity. Diversity thus comes to hold the promise of *jouissance* while guaranteeing the symbolic existence of the organisation, which in its striving towards heterogeneity can understand itself in dialectical opposition to homogeneity.

5.5.6 A desire–diversity incongruity

The analysis so far more than suggests that there is incongruence between what is desired in diversity and what one gets to enjoy in diversity. This is, we argue, due to the lack in diversity that, however, also makes diversity a desired object for the interviewees for several reasons. One is that the lack equips diversity with the quality of an empty signifier, meaning it can always be different from what it seems to be.

> Our issue is not really equality; it's the lack of diverse perspectives. Well, those two issues are connected somehow, right? But we've got a lot of white men with similar experiences in life. So it's more about personality than it is about gender, right? There's of course also a cultural aspect to it.

However, the interviewees not only struggle with the ontological understanding of *what* diversity is and hence also how they are to approach diversity; they also struggle to argue *why* diversity can materialise as an object-cause of desire.

Diversity to me, besides having competent employees, is all about the societies in which we do business. If we're not diverse, we're out of sync with the reality that we live in.

Thus, diversity becomes a safeguard against missed business opportunities, which the next quote will elaborate further:

I don't find diversity important. It is our core activities that are important. So I prefer not to measure, say, the percentage of ethnic minorities among our staff. I'd rather just focus on the core services and the competences we need to provide those services. With that said, the citizens that we provide services to are diverse, so it is quite natural that our employees have to be diverse too.

The interviewee does not want to measure the diversity in her organisation in any numeric sense. Yet, that is exactly what management in her organisation committed itself to do when it signed the charter for more women managers. Diversity is relevant to the organisation only insofar as it is relevant to core business. This so-called business case in diversity, however, can be self-refuting, as we shall see below, leaving the respondents with only the lack in diversity.

We usually say that we need to mirror our customers and the people that we trade with. Well, 80 per cent of those we do business with are men.

So where is the value-add in gender diversity? The interviewee continues arguing along the lines that more women in the organisation would, so to say, spice things up. Because his diversity focus is as such he, however, fails to see how organisational culture may conventionalise people (women) who might initially have been 'diverse' but need to downplay any heterogeneity to better fit the norms for being a good employee and/or manager.

> I'm not saying that a company could be successful merely because it employs 50 dumb blondes. But I think it's outright wrong that when I look down the hallway, everybody's wearing the same suit as me, and the same white shirt. Well, mine is the latest fashion (laughing), but Christ that's boring to look at! And I don't get why it has to be that way. Maybe in some companies it makes sense that we all look alike – it's a tough nut to crack.

The lack in diversity allows the interviewee to stretch the concept and make it about dress code or even (hetero)sexual attraction. The conceptual stretching makes it impossible for the respondent to settle and enjoy what diversity is. Instead, he can only enjoy the symptom (anxiety) that is the semblances of desire for what diversity may become.

5.6 Concluding discussion

As other literature has also shown, diversity as a concept has developed into an ever-dissolving, yet desirable idea (of a fantasy) (Lorbiecki and Jack 2000; Schwabenland and Tomlinson 2015; Zanoni and Janssens 2004). Building on this paradoxical finding, we have illustrated empirically how the concept of diversity

empties of signifiers, but remains imagined and desired as if it did contain signifiers. The concept should as such be understood not as a thing in itself, but rather as similar to Lacan's reading of Freud's "das Ding" (Lacan 2006, 550) – that is, a signifier with no signified, and hence, to an extent, some-thing beyond signification that escapes us. Our theoretical contribution, then, lies with the unfolding of the paradox in diversity studies by means of psychoanalytical theory, in particular Lacan's concepts of desire and lack, whose heuristic applicability has helped us explain *how* diversity can remain desired while constantly (unknowingly) dissolving into no-thing. In doing this, the conclusions to this paper are threefold, as we have theorised and illustrated 1) the way organisational diversity is constructed around a psychoanalytic lack, 2) how the endless desire for diversity produces organisational anxiety as a symptom of that lack, and 3) how it then obstructs (the desired) productive work with diversity. Below, we will elaborate on and discuss each contribution in turn and, eventually, give our thoughts as to how to appreciate the 'openness' of diversity that the lack–desire relationship gives birth to.

Firstly, building on critical diversity studies and in particular Schwabenland and Tomlinson's (2015) analysis of diversity as phantasmagoria, we have investigated the way the concept of diversity is impossible to define in any absolute sense, and hence impossible to evaluate too, because it is always-already in the process of becoming something else. Indeed, it is not just impossible to define; impossibility is what determines diversity as lack. We have extended this discussion by diving deeper into the psychoanalytical dynamics of the ways in which diversity as a concept is constructed and understood around a fundamental lack. By conceptualising diversity as constituted by lack, we have therefore expanded the knowledge of how and why diversity can be perceived as phantasmagorical.

Whereas Schwabenland and Tomlinsson (2015, 1930) develop "a greater understanding of the emotional experiences that accompany the practice of diversity management", we have been able to take a step behind the emotional displays per se, to explain how unconscious processes turn diversity into a lacking chain of signifiers with no signifieds, and how this lacking property sets in motion an insatiable desire, not for more, but for something else, something different. Diversity as the object of an organisation is thus never desired in itself. The object of diversity is somehow missing to our respondents and always will be due to the elusiveness of the concept, prompted by the lack. The empirical significations in the analysis are thus presented not as expressions of desire, but rather as *semblances* of desire, to better grasp how the interviewees anxiously hop from signifier to signifier in an attempt to fill in the lack.

Second, our analysis has revealed how lack, as central to diversity, must necessarily bring about a sensation of anxiety that is symptomatic of the constitutively empty form of diversity. Anxiety is therefore related to the uncertainty associated with the traumatic experience of always falling short of what is desired in an object – in this case, the experience of failed diversity due to the conceptual stretching, which dilutes the idea of diversity while it remains imagined and hence desired nonetheless. Accordingly, we have presented organisational anxiety as a symptom of that issue.

Importantly, the symptomatic anxiety, which emerges as a product of the lack in diversity, is ambiguous, as it stems from the continuous emptying of the signifying chain in relation to the concept. The experiences of anxiety in diversity as a concept

being given only by a psychoanalytic lack are twofold. By conceptualising diversity as psychoanalytic we wish to convey a negative ontology that purports an emptiness or absence as the structuring function at the centre of the diversity concept. One state of anxiousness in this regard is found in the incongruence between what is desired in diversity and what one actually gets to enjoy in it. From Lacan we understand that there is always more to diversity as the object-cause of desire than what can possibly be expressed symbolically in any organisational context. In fact, what is desired is desire itself, so as soon as a certain symbolisation of diversity, i.e. a specific semblance of desire, seems to be realised, our interviewees do not experience *jouissance*, since diversity then changes into something else. At least, they do not get to enjoy what they assume *jouissance* to signify. The moment of enjoyment is for that reason as much a moment of loathing, because of the perceived discrepancy between what (we think) we desire and what we get. Diversity is always lacking, and it will as a result never reach any symbolic closure. It is, as also noted by Jones and Spicer (2005, 237), an object-cause of desire only insofar as we never achieve it, for if we do, it collapses, falls apart, and is changed inexplicably into a "gift of shit" (see also Lacan 1977, 268). The alternative, however, is symbolic completeness, which would give – albeit only momentarily – a sensation of lacking the lack in diversity, in which case the organisation would come to falsely believe it had already arrived at the one true meaning of the concept, only to realise shortly after that that was not it either. Lacking lack keeps one from desiring, and, therefore, from the very process of becoming whole as a diverse organisation. Thus, the only option left is for the interviewees to enjoy the ride, i.e. enjoy the symptom that is their desire and the anxiety that follows.

Third, one cannot *not* lack diversity, since that would be the equivalent of symbolic completeness, which would deny us our desire(s). This insight leaves us with only

one option: the anxious position of always falling short of what is desired in order to keep desiring and cover up the lack. If not complete symbolically, the organisation will, by inference, be incomplete. In the interviews presented there is a limit to representation due to the conceptual stretching of diversity, which is possible, as the lack turns diversity into an empty signifier with no corresponding signified. Anxiety is, in this connection, found in-between the Imaginary, i.e. the fantasies that teach the interviewees what to desire in diversity, and the Real, which renders real that not everything in diversity can be symbolised. From a Lacanian point of view, our interviewees are, despite continuous efforts, never to enjoy diversity in any absolute sense, as the desire then would reveal itself as a death drive. So *either* they never obtain the *objet petit a*, in which case they keep fantasising to animate the object-cause of their desire; *or* they actually do reach what they think they desire in the object of diversity, instantaneously realising that it could not make them whole – that this kind of diversity was a fantasy all along, which only moments after is replaced with another fantasy driving the semblances of desire for (an-)other (un)obtainable idea(ls) of diversity. Simply not desiring at all is not an option.

Some of the respondents represented in this study seem to know that what they are doing is somehow falling short of what they want to do in terms of diversity. Yet, they are still doing it. They show signs of being aware that their current efforts alone do not grant them the object-cause of their desire, which is – as one interviewee also explains – but one reason why they have agreed to take part in the study in the first place. They hope that the interviewer as the big Other can tell them exactly what is expected of them – that is, precisely what to desire in diversity, not to mention how it ought to be managed. In the meantime, they keep acting as if they were completely unaware of the limitations of existing diversity initiatives, meaning the illusion is

not necessarily in their lack of knowledge but, as Žižek (2012, 315–316) would formulate it, in the social reality that their activities bring about.

Conclusively, we would therefore like to suggest further investigation of these organisational realities with the aim of rejecting the symptom treatment that is the existing management practices of organising diversity. Anxiety is not the problem; it is merely a symptom of a problem. The problem, or what can be problematised, is the failure of current diversity programmes. And the lack in diversity is the psychoanalytic diagnosis of that problem. Maybe it is time to replace symptom management with symptom enjoyment. By doing this, we turn anxiety into excitement by appreciating what Driver (2013, 419) calls "the ever-present emancipatory potential of the power of lack". Although keeping the organisations from arriving at a positive form of diversity, it is, in fact, the power of lack that ensures the continued attraction of diversity issues in spite of difficulties with living the dream of being a diverse organisation. We argue that a move from symptom management to enjoyment would mean that one may come to terms with the loathing side to *jouissance* when working with diversity in a way that also acknowledges the intricacy of power and identity, which might provoke and challenge the status quo – in other words, unleash the emancipatory power of lack (Driver 2013, 418). As we have fleshed out in the analysis, doing something just to alleviate feelings of anxiety risks falling short of what is intended. Enjoying the symptomatic anxiety that the lack of diversity brings about may grant new meaningful desires and fantasies of organisational diversity.

Our advocacy for exploring the power of lack should, however, not blindfold us as scholars or as practitioners to the fact that the consequences of non-diverse

organisations are material. For the managers we interviewed – who were, by and large, white, middle-aged and heterosexual and who, in terms of income, decision-making power and political clout, belonged to an 'elite' class – it is clearly a privilege that they can choose whether or not (and in what way) to engage with diversity issues. By this we mean to acknowledge how the option of embracing the emancipatory power of lack assumes a position of (white, elite) privilege that is reinforced by the fact that diversity can even appear as lack to the managers. Marginalised employees, i.e. the ones who become the attraction of the managers' desires, have diversity imposed upon them – marked on their bodies, as they become diverse in this gaze of the other (see Özkazanc-Pan 2008 for an excellent analysis of how difference is constructed as a result of the constructed distinction between "the West and the rest of the world"). They are as such always-already engaged whether they want to be or not.

Ultimately, and comparably to both Driver (2013) and Schwabenland and Tomlinsson (2015), we do *not* see diversity as lack and the anxiety it produces as inherently or exclusively negative. One way of relating to the detrimental effects of lack that we spell out in the analysis is to let work with diversity languish in its own conditions of (im)possibility. Another way is to allow the lack to engender constructive and possibly transformative change. This perspective, however, entails that one enjoys our analytical presentation of the several and ambiguous meanings of diversity – and disregards the idea of there being one solution or a 'quick fix' in the pursuit of short-term gains. It is exactly this impossibility – that diversity is what it is not – that, at once, conditions the possibility of diversity. The lack of diversity opens our respondents' eyes to the 'becomingness' of diversity, which, to us, suggests that an organisation cannot be diverse per se, but that expressions of diversity are fantasies of a desired place to be – a dream scenario. The concept can

therefore be heuristic as a travelling companion for a (diversity) manager to (re)discover alternative approaches to organisational diversity. To critical diversity scholars, such a companionship would entail revisiting the literature on diversity, focusing on diversity *both* as a concept *and* as an object of empirical inquiry.

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6.0 Article two

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Queer organising and performativity: Towards a norm-critical conceptualisation of organisational intersectionality

Abstract

This paper addresses recent debates of critical performativity and queer theory in critical management studies to develop new, norm-critical methods for critical diversity management. It does so by reading across these debates and, in particular, engaging with the concept of intersectionality. This concept dislocates attention from one diversity category to multiple categories, and how they, by their intersections, produce specific identities and power relations. Building on this, and through empirical observations of norm-critical workshop facilitation in two case organisations, the paper develops a norm-critical method for visualising intersecting diversity categories while, at the same time, transgressing them in order to acknowledge difference without having it fixed as such – presented as ephemeral moments of intersectionality. In addition to illustrating how a reflexive approach to underlying structures of norms in (an) organisation can also render visible unmarked categories of power and privilege, the author discusses possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method of intervention for research and practices of diversity management, with emphasis on the kind of critique that is performed.

6.1 Introduction

This paper addresses seemingly deadlocked discussions in critical management studies (CMS) about organisational intersectionality. On the one hand, the mainstream functionalist approach to diversity in organisation and management studies (OMS) is criticised for being performative. Its critical counterpart is, on the other hand, criticised for its non-performative intent, that is to say, for taking a diametrical opposition to performative managerialism (Parker and Parker, 2017). In other words, CMS criticises the use of diversity, including a lack of analytical sensitivity towards intersectional issues in OMS, but is itself criticised for not mobilising in practice the insights that the criticism brings about. I will in this introductory section provide a brief summary of this academic debate and, in line with other critical diversity scholars, problematise the absence of employee diversity in organisations while simultaneously outlining crucial shortcomings to the ways diversity as difference is traditionally conceptualised in the OMS literature in essentialist terms. The essentialist approach remains blind to how power, history and culture form particular gendered, raced, classed and sexed perceptions of workers (Ahonen et al., 2014). These structured discourses place certain expectations on individual behaviour based on what is normalised and becomes the norm for a given socially constructed category (Ashcraft, 2013).

It is well established in OMS that diversity, if managed properly, can lead to improved organisational performance (e.g. Williams and Mavin, 2014; Qin et al., 2014). Companies are, following this modernist rationale, thought to be able to improve their economic bottom lines by actively valuing socio-demographic differences among their employees (e.g. Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000; Cox and Blake, 1991). Consequently, diversity management is turned into a strategic approach to

human resource management (HRM), as organising diversity becomes a means to successfully attaining corporate goals (Lorbiecki and Jack, 2000).

It is, however, also a well-known fact within CMS that such a functionalist business case approach to diversity tends to hide power relations by 'naturalising diversity as a group's universal fixed essence' (Zanoni and Janssens, 2003: 57), based on the assumption that the ascribed socio-demographic characteristics are constitutive for these essences. It is, as a result, 'assume[d] that diversity is a universal and objective fact that can be described, measured, and used' (*ibid.*), meaning diversity is conceived of as reality in contemporary organisations rather than as a social construct reflecting existing power relations. Thus, the extant critical diversity literature calls out a built-in sameness-difference dilemma, since employee diversity is either assimilated or marginalised (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013; Shore et al., 2011). In both cases, diversity remains invisible and an idle force of exclusion-inclusion mechanisms in organisational settings.

From a critical and post-structural, rather than a universal and objective, perspective, diversity becomes a social construction (Holck et al., 2016). The way people are perceived as either same or different therefore depends on local subjective and relational perceptions (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013). Lorbiecki and Jack (2000) demonstrate how the structures and discourses change across time and place, while Zanoni and Janssens (2007) make it clear that organisational interest in diversity is an identity-regulating factor that implies power dynamics at all times and in any context, albeit in ever-changing ways (Schwabenland and Tomlinson, 2015). The meaning of 'critical' in critical diversity studies has in this way come to

denote exposure of and reflection upon established ideas and modes of organising with an emancipatory potential that is, generally speaking, yet to be realised.

Performative diversity management, defined as forms of knowledge production exclusively serving economic efficiency (Cabantous et al., 2016), is, in other words, found to be prone to marginalise employees by reinforcing stereotypes and prejudices that provoke and widen gaps between people. As attention is paid – literally speaking – to the business imperative, the broader picture is neglected; aspects of social justification, such as issues of identity and power, are disguised. The point is that the practice of managing diversity becomes performative in actively producing socio-demographic differences in the workforce, and that these differences are not necessarily relevant a priori the process of organising diversity, but are rather products of the power-laden operations of the focal organisation (Janssens and Zanoni, 2005). Yet, if mainstream – that is to say, instrumental – diversity management is performative, there is reason to believe that a critical approach to organising diversity can become (critically) performative too.

6.1.1 Intersectionality and the 'turn' to critical performativity

While the criticism of mainstream diversity management can be boiled down to a negligence of the issues of identity and power and their relations interwoven in the 'fixed' employee categories as a product of diversity management operations (*ibid.*) the critical perspective is, ironically, criticised for being just that: critical, and hence dismissive of the empirical work of developing practical tools and recommendations that break with a binary thinking. Methods of intervention are what the extant literature lacks – and is calling for. As Holck et al. (2016: 53) highlight: '[A]lthough existing critical contributions to the diversity literature have successfully helped

understanding the shortcomings of SIT [social identity theory] and essentialist, de-politicised categorisations, such streams have yet to develop solid empirical work mobilising these theoretical insights'. As a field-in-the-making, critical diversity studies faces this challenge of bridging the gap between theory and practice by means of operationalising the criticism. Echoing the words of Spicer et al. (2009; 2016), this entails a research agenda that not only aims at questioning and problematising current diversity practices, but also seeks to engage subversively with these practices and managerial discourses.

The same goes for intersectionality studies. Like in CMS in general, there is among intersectionality scholars an open call for enacting change in order not just to challenge but to eliminate the inequalities that both strands of research have fleshed out over the years. There is as such unexplored terrain in the move 'from investigation to intervention' (Rodriguez et al., 2016). Intersectionality as a concept becomes relevant in respect to the critical stance, because it assumes human identity to be 'constituted by a set of intersections and the mutually-constituted regimes of knowledge and power that shape everyday life within organizations' (Styhre and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2008: 578). Intersectional frameworks are, however, a rare sight in OMS, as elaborated in the call for this special issue. When applied to the field of organisations, intersectional perspectives are considered too interpellated by identities and identity formation at the individual level at the expense of the structural dimension of intersectionality (Boogaard and Roggeband, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2016).

In their editorial for the recent *Gender, Work and Organization* special issue on theory and praxis of intersectionality in work and organisations, Rodriguez et al.

(2016) call out what they label 'ritual-like citing' of certain categories of difference (they specifically mention gender, race and class), which tends to downplay other categories (here they mention age, sexuality and religion). It also, they say, puts a damper on the potential discovery of new, empirically emerging and perhaps more relevant categories of difference, such as linguistic fluency (see e.g. Johansson and Śliwa, 2016). Although intersectionality research has been successful in rendering visible the multiplicity of diverse identities and their related systems of (in)equality, it is still, in the words of Choo and Ferree (2010: 145), easier to 'include multiply-marginalized groups than to analyze the relationships that affect them intersectionally'. I take this to mean that there is a need to go beyond the categories, and where categorisation is considered an unavoidable part of a methodological strategy when researching organisational intersectionality, one could, as suggested by Choo and Ferree (2010: 147, emphasis added), consider 'how a design will denaturalize hegemonic relations, particularly by drawing attention to the *unmarked* categories where power and privilege cluster'. That could, as suggested in this paper, be a design that addresses underlying organisational norms in order to capture intersectional perspectives at a structural level and grasp the normative conditions that enable some categories to remain unmarked.

Rodriguez et al. (2016) point out four focal points for moving the field of intersectionality in work and organisations forward. Among these are the calls for framing the conceptual meaning of intersectionality (see also Acker, 2012) and for operationalising it and putting it into practice. There is, they note, 'a pressing need for intersectionality research in work and organisations that moves beyond subjectivities to capture micro-level encounters, *structures*, systemic processes and institutional arrangements' (Rodriguez et al., 2016: 204, emphasis added). It is, however, questionable whether subversive change is possible if such change is

attempted from either a performative or a non-performative position in isolation, since any action is already conditioned by the power-knowledge, i.e. the multiple and intersecting subjectivities that are to be subverted, and hence changed. As mentioned above, intersectional approaches struggle to embrace this critical argument because intersectionality, by definition, is dependent on social categorisation in order to investigate how different identities intersect and form 'new' groups of categorisation.

6.1.2 Queering intersectionality: A norm-critical way forward?

Intersectionality, in this regard, seems to fall short as a heuristic framework for intervention, since intersectionality always-already relies on working with the very same categories that a critically performative approach has as its foreground to queer in the rejection of 'normal', resisting any one definition of diversity, insisting on multiplicity instead (Pullen et al., 2016a). Queering, as Parker (2002: 148; see also 2016) puts it, is 'an attitude of unceasing disruptiveness', which is at the heart of critical deconstruction of demographic categories and knowledge, thereby breaking with the repetition of the 'normalised' (Muhr et al., 2016; Muhr and Sullivan, 2013). The crucial argument for queering such categories is that they 'obscure differential experiences and re-affirm existing inequalities' (King, 2016: 9). As recently noted by Ashcraft and Muhr (2017), these categories often depend on constructed dualisms, e.g. the gender binary of women/men where both appear to be mutually exclusive, since the binary understanding of diversity asserts oppositional poles of privilege and disadvantage, respectively, where, citing Dougherty and Hode (2016: 1731), 'the privileged poles of binaries sets tend to be linked to other privileged poles' and vice versa. Moreover, such dichotomous understandings of diversity foreclose intersectional experiences.

If we as scholars are to engage with intersectional realities in organisations, and if such an engagement is to have any critically performative outcome, the question is how to work with categorisations while simultaneously overriding them, that is to say, how to 'visiblise' (e.g. Widerberg, 2000) multiple and intersecting social identities without simultaneously reducing them as such. In a concluding remark, Holck and Muhr (2017: 10) recently suggested a norm-critical way forward, with which they wish to nurture 'critical awareness of the latent danger of fixing differences to the detriment of the skills and experiences a diverse group of employees brings to the organisations, while keeping in mind the value of recognizing differences'. The question then is how to work in such a norm-critical manner. If we buy into the critical argument for transgressing the categories, then we have to understand how the categories come into the picture in the first place. That is, we must move beyond objectifying categories and, in their place, explicate the social relations – the norms – that rule people's knowing and doing in organisational settings (Campbell, 2016).

The purpose of this paper is to examine what it would entail to approach organisational intersectionality norm critically by including the power of normalisation, i.e. by continuously challenging the explicit and implicit norms that underlie organisational practices and that structure social relations, standards and expectations (Ghorashi and Ponzoni, 2014). The argument put forward in this paper, in a nutshell, is that intersectionality is an important leap forward, from paying attention to one category at a time, to attending to several categories and their interrelated flows of power at once, but that the next step – moving from investigation to intervention as well as from a performative/non-performative dichotomy to critical performativity – is to reject categorisation (or at least keep it

in suspense) by means of continuous critical reflection on underlying norms of organisational intersectionality. I by no means intend to replace intersectionality studies with norm critique. Rather, I want to suggest that norm critique is a method with which one can analyse the effects of what I in the analysis suggest to be ephemeral moments of intersectionality while intervening in existing organisational practices and managerial discourses of diversity.

The research aim of this paper is to conceptualise norm critique based on a combined reading of queer theory and critical performativity, and subsequently to illustrate empirically how to advance norm-critical methods for intervention following such critically performative queer theory. In merging queer theory with critical performativity, arriving at a queer performativity that is open to organisational realities of intersectionality, I move on to clarify what constitutes a critical norm, after which I elaborate on the kind of critique that is performed. Norm critique, as presented in this paper, takes inspiration from organisations whose members experience the discrimination and repression associated with the intersections of multiple identities. This could be considered an 'intersectional' research approach to the extent that the study is conducted with the influence of the people it is about (see e.g. IGLYO, 2014). I will for that reason reflect upon the empirical context and background of this study in connection with the analytical illustrations. In addition to illustrating how a reflexive approach to underlying structures of norms in organisations can render unmarked categories as well as intersecting diversity categories visible while, at the same time, transgressing them in order to acknowledge difference without it being fixed as such, I discuss possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of diversity management.

6.2 Queer performativity as ephemeral intersectionality

This section positions norm critique as the interplay of queer theory and critical performativity – queer performativity in short. I subscribe to the work of Pullen et al. (2016b) in arguing that queer is a form of immanent critique, as queering entails a rejection of categorical thinking – hence the potential for critical performativity and for exploring emerging, ephemeral moments of intersectionality.

Practitioners and researchers alike have to various extents relied on putting workers into neat and tidy demographic groups for convenience samples, which is probably why Nkomo and Hoobler (2014) describe the diversity literature as being almost deaf to the reality of intersectionality. Attending to one category at a time is, from an intersectional perspective, insufficient if we want to understand multiple intersecting processes of identification, meaning that simply listing the accumulated effects of each category is not an option either. Queering is, in that regard, not a question of 'neutralising' the binaries that currently inform subjectivity intersectionally, e.g. the gender binary man/woman, by introducing an alleged 'third' position, which is one form of multiplicity as laid out in extant literature (e.g. Linstead and Pullen, 2006). Nor is it an attempt at replacing 'old' categories with new ones. This would arguably be a form of multiplicity as sameness in the sense that subjectivity is still limited to binary conceptions, e.g. masculinities and femininities, albeit acknowledging a plural understanding as opposed to masculinity and femininity in the singular form. The queer pose is as such one that withstands the closure inherent in the binary logic of being either/or (it would, in rejecting categorisation, rather be neither/nor), because queering, ontologically speaking, suggests being as both/and, i.e. endless becomings of differences (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017).

Accordingly, this paper is not discussing a queer position in the definitive form, or in any absolute sense, or as something one is because queer is never one (Just et al., 2017; Pullen et al., 2016a). On the contrary, it is the active, dynamic (as in non-static) form of queer*ing* that is the point of departure, meaning queer is not something one is (constative); it is something one *does* (performative) and then becomes, although such queerness is, for the same reason, difficult to uphold. That would, in principle, be an endless practice of queering, and hence of becoming, as the queerness would otherwise become identical with itself and thus, strictly speaking, cease to be queer.

Queering or queerness puts into practice Butler's assertion that discursive categories, including gender and sexuality, are performative in constituting what they name (King, 2016):

> [Gender] is thus not the product of choice, but the forcible citation of a *norm*, one whose complex historicity is indissociable from relations of discipline, regulation, punishment. Indeed, there is not 'one' who takes on a gender norm. On the contrary, this citation of the gender norm is necessary in order to qualify as a 'one', to become viable as a 'one', where subject-formation is dependent on the prior operation of legitimating gender norms. (Butler, 2011/1993: 266, emphasis added)

Individuals must, to put it differently, repeat and thereby produce norms to be recognised as individuals, or as professionals, at a workplace. There is, however, more to the quote, namely that norms do not exist outside their repetitions (Just et

al., 2017), meaning norms depend just as much on the repetition as individuals do if the norms are to obtain a persisting false naturalness. Governing social norms are, from this point of view, something we install collectively as enough of us – a majority – perpetuate them through continuous repetitions. This also implies that there is a critical performative potential for action, for change, if the norms are repeated with alterity. Subversion of the norm is by no means guaranteed, as repetitions with a difference might as well fail in denaturalising norms (Allen, 1998) – a case of failed performativity (Fleming and Banerjee, 2015). But queering, as practised by the organisations presented in this paper, is not necessarily a question of introducing new normativities. Rather, queering is about being open to the intersectional experiences of others.

As Parker and Parker (2017) point out, critical performativity – as spearheaded by Spicer et al. (2016; 2009) – rests on a Butlerian reading of discourse conditioning performativity. Discourse captures vital aspects of dominant organisational activity, is useful for empirical analysis and is, for those two reasons, apt for a critical performative view on organisations (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2011), not to mention the act of organising diversity. Trittin and Schoenborn (2015), for instance, show how a discursive perspective on diversity may help to shift focus away from the individual-bound demographic criteria applied in the seemingly contradictive performative/non-performative traditions of diversity management. Instead, the authors theorise how diversity can be understood as a form of discursive representation where different voices become visible and present in organisations. However, as the authors also mention, whether different voices get to contribute to the discursive diversity of organisations depends on the degree to which these voices can also voice difference *structurally* in organisational settings.

Viewing diversity as discourse furthermore helps to explain why some diversity objectives are not met when diversity communication is kept from being performative, critically, due to the constative nature of much diversity reporting (for an example of this, see Christensen and Muhr, 2017). In such cases there tends to be incongruence between talk and action. However, this suggests a static relationship that only pays lip service to temporality. Diversity initiatives could, as is the case with CSR initiatives in Christensen et al. (2013), be seen as 'aspirational talk', i.e. a communicated desired place to be, meaning discrepancies between talk and action are inevitable – and perhaps even desirable. Such aspirational talk would, potentially, allow for new organisational subjectivities to emerge by means of 'talking into existence' (Wickert and Schaefer, 2014) new spaces for different realities that make available new subject positions to speak from. As Cabantous et al. (2016: 197) point out, the constitution of subjects 'is an inherently material and discursive construct, and happens through the political engineering of sociomaterial agencements', and it is this insight that takes us back to the Butlerian understanding of discourse as the very condition of performativity.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2011; see also 2000) problematise a sole focus on discursive practice that leaves the non-discursive unattended to, which is why this paper takes a particular interest in the governing social norms that discourse – presumably – is anchored in. If performativity is conditioned by discourse, subjects are, by inference, constituted by discourse, although not necessarily discursively determined. This is the assertion of critical performativity (Nentwich et al., 2015). If 'identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results' (Butler, 1990: 34), the logical conclusion is that being – in any emancipatory sense of the word – entails doing differently, i.e. allowing for variation to enter the repetition. In order to be critical and avoid 'failed

performativities' (Fleming and Banerjee, 2015), critical performativity has to include the studied organisation in its 'entirety', as it not only constitutes organisational subjects; it is also itself performatively constituted (Cabantous et al., 2016). Thus, in taking forward critical performativity:

> [W]e cannot assume that managers (or employees, shareholders, etc.) are unitary subjects who can change themselves. Rather, they are complex subjects moving between subject positions where identity and agency is performatively constituted within and through different circulating discourses […] Thus, a political theory of performativity needs to understand and then change the terms within and through which subjects constitute identities within organisational subject positions. That is, we should not focus only on change to spoken words, but to the identity-constituting, *norm*-infested discourses that precede subjects. (Cabantous et al., 2016: 205, emphasis added)

A critically performative methodology must, for that reason, 'undo' organisational performativity, which, as suggested by Riach et al. (2016), can be done through 'anti-narrative' research. This entails reflexive undoing of organisational subjectivities and the very normative conditions upon which these subjectivities depend. The raison d'être of the methodology is its applicability in revealing the processes and governmental norms by which workplace subjectivities are shaped – a process that also allows us to tap into the identity work that goes into presenting oneself as an intelligible organisational subject:

As such, a reflexive undoing must contrast with a more performative, organisational undoing in revealing lived experiences of being subject to the 'rules and *norms*' we are required to conform to 'if we are to exist' not simply in a physical sense, but as viable, social subjects, within and through organisational settings. (*ibid.*: 7, emphasis added)

Hence, this approach of norm-critical performativity allows for examination of the normative conditions of organisational recognition as well as the consequences of misrecognition (*ibid.*), and, in doing so, opens up a discursive space for change. Actionable knowledge, i.e. applied norm-critical research, entails what Fleming and Spicer (2003) describe as a shift in focus from qualities within employees to *externalities*. The object of inquiry is one's approach to diversity, not diversity itself. This has the potential to open doors to other practices of diversity with an emancipatory perspective otherwise shut down by the dominant direction of current diversity production emanating from the financial imperative (Omanović, 2013).

A practical example of 'externalising' the problem is found in Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008a: 4-5), where the authors explain in detail how they created a space for organisational reflexivity by articulating a new language, a new way of narrating the corporate reality, with new possibilities for action. For instance, instead of subscribing to a binary (common-sensical) understanding that reduces genders to 'women' and 'men', the researchers constructed a neologism of 'managers in female and male bodies', which allowed them to also discuss the intersectionalities of male bonding, masculinities and (referring to ethnic-racialised hierarchies) cultural cloning. While Staunæs and Søndergaard are careful not to conclude that their research was indeed performative critically (they talk about

usefulness from different epistemological positions), it arguably resulted in discursive openings from queering (*troubling* in their words) the binary distinction of women and men. The queer pose shed light on a company norm for management that displaced women and men alike who failed to perform masculinity correctly (that is to say in a manner congruous with their bodies) and as such deviated from the norm – in other words, how management as a discipline was gendered. Moreover, whiteness and social and professional background were found to be embedded in the masculinity norm. Queering, therefore, seems to be imperative if diversity work is to become 'useful' in the critically performative sense of the word and not simply confirm and reproduce existing underlying normative rationalities in organisations.

6.3 Norm critique and its critical potential for intersectional organisation studies

In continuation of the above theorisation of norm critique, this paper will go one step further in also advancing norm-critical methods as they may manifest following such critically performative queer theory. Norm critique, I contend, is the form a critically performative queering may take in practice and as a method for intervention.

6.3.1 Defining organisational norms

To comprehend this conceptual framework, we must first investigate what constitutes a critical norm and how it works. Norms can be (and are in the work of both case organisations) defined as unwritten – in some cases written – rules and expectations that become precepts for behaviour. Norms should therefore *not* be

thought of as certain standards, e.g. espoused values and beliefs, as is commonly the case if, for instance, applying the cultural perspective of Schein (2004). The point is that norms are constituted performatively as they are continually repeated in, by and through organisation(s) and, consequently, become normalised. Social norms thereby establish a sort of business-as-usual as the 'normal' thing to do, including how to conduct yourself in given situations at work if you are to be recognised as a – using Butler's (2011/1993) terminology – 'viable one'. In that sense, you become a subject *of* organisation. This understanding of norms aligns better with what Schein (2004) defines as basic underlying assumptions, since the norms appear as the (only) 'natural' thing to do in a specific (work) context. This is not the same as saying that norms cannot be expressed in espoused values and beliefs, merely that established ideas and norms work at a 'deeper' level. They come to function as self-evident ways of doing things in particular situations and have implications for identity construction (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002) when, for instance, feeding into the social categories to which individuals are ascribed. Consequently, norms are taken for granted, as they are naturalised over time and therefore become invisible to the naked eye – or at least difficult to spot – until someone breaks with the norm in failing to perform in accordance with the organisational expectations that a given norm gives birth to.

Take this sentence as a somewhat banal, yet illustrative, example.[8] You probably noticed that it is written in a colour that makes the font stand out in comparison to the paragraphs above. Your exposure to the unusual choice of colour for the text

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[8] In the version of this article, published in *ephemera*, the font colour has been set to default (black), testifying to the regulatory power of norms as standards.

probably made you aware of the fact that texts are normally printed in black, the point being that you weren't giving it much of a thought until just now. Presented with a text that deviates from the default colour code, however, made you painfully aware of the font colour norm, black, and you most likely have an opinion about whether it's right or wrong of me to use different colours in academic writing. Maybe it makes my work appear a little frivolous. Perhaps it's desirable for different reasons. Regardless, to avoid sanctions (in this case questions from perplexed reviewers, not meeting the standard requirements for publication, etc.), surely it'd be easier for me simply to adhere to the norm and it wouldn't be 'abnormal' to receive that recommendation, e.g. from a reviewer or the editor. This is precisely where and how norms derive 'their' power: from ideas of normality and processes of adherence to often tacit norms.

Referring back to Schein (2004: 12), norms can, in line with the example above, be understood as shared assumptions, in which case they derive power from the fact that they are taken for granted and get to operate outside awareness. They are as such non-questionable and affect organisational behaviour because an act based on any other premise than the norm is inconceivable due to the false naturalisation of the norm. From this point of view, norms not only affect organisational structures; they *are* structuring mechanisms of organisation. Norms are in that sense a form of culture control that normalises 'irrational' behaviour, the point being that what constitutes rational and irrational, respectively, is judged from a given norm(ative perspective). Certain values are deemed self-evident. It's like – paraphrasing Kunda (1992/2001: 353) – having a religion without knowing how you got it. As a religious or ideological belief is normalised, it gets to shape lived experiences of self, of one's identities, and, as a result, construct certain expectations to live up to (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). Norms, in other words, inform identity work (Alvesson and Willmott,

2002) based on the socially established truths about what is normal, meaning norms, from a managerial perspective, have an identity regulatory potential. It is, however, a subtle form of power that, based on historical and cultural categories of difference and sameness, casts some (groups of) people into predefined roles that are noticed as being different, while others, the norm, may go under the radar as the (company) custom around which everyone else is deemed diverse.

Norm critique is an exposure of this kind of power in relation to a (post-structuralist) self that is contingent, fragmented and conditioned by context, e.g. one's perception of the expectations of significant others, with the organisation itself typically materialising as one such other (Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2013). The self and one's identity is therefore constantly negotiated relative to the surroundings, i.e. it is constructed by – repeating Cabantous et al. (2016) – norm-infested discourses. Norm critique, as also recently noted by Henriksson (2017), is a development in queer resistance that seeks to challenge institutionalised norms and hence existing power relations too. It originates, broadly speaking, from queer theory and related pedagogical practices but has, for instance in Sweden, spread and developed into a mode of governance for some of the public institutions that play a role in producing the societal norms which norm critique seeks to dismantle. Norm critique is therefore not only queer but also potentially performative, critically, in its attempt at denaturalising and hence repoliticising dominant norms as a contingent and contested terrain by means of explicating the norms. In doing so, norm critique may render visible 'apolitical' discourses of, for instance, 'merit' and 'inclusion' (e.g. Christensen and Muhr, forthcoming 2018) and address complicated issues of how and why people are treated differently in relation to the intersectional interplay of norms around gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. The performed critique is as such

about making life harder and more challenging, rather than easier and more agreeable (Raffnsøe, 2017).

6.3.2 A critique beyond criticism

New normativities are not the end goal per se – at least not for the organisations presented in this paper. Being critical is not an end in itself either. Norm critique, as practised by the case organisations, is, I propose, about revitalising diversity work. As an example of this, Janssens and Zanoni (2014) argue that 'classical' diversity management reduces ethnic minority employees to representatives of a stigmatised social group by focusing on individuals' cognitive biases towards (out-)group members. The alternative approach suggested by the authors, on the other hand, juggles with a new normal that broadens the views on dominant norms and identities to redefine a new standard all employees alike are measured against, which to some extent counteracts – at the structural level – some inequality issues. I do not wish to suggest that norm critique somehow suspends normative judgement, but rather that the critical attitude, the unceasing disruptiveness, involves an *ongoing* normative commitment that never settles. This form of critique – and the reason why I consistently write 'critique' rather than 'criticism' – is to suggest the virtuousness of critique as 'a practical ethical attitude that suspends obedience to authority and general rules (norms) to focus on the cultivation of judiciousness and excellence with regard to the conduct of already existing dispositions and the challenges they present' (Raffnsøe, 2017: 50). Understood this way, critique cannot be formulated as impartial and general criticism from outside; it can only be formulated as a relational critique (Staunæs, 2016).

In order to present a workable method of norm critique, the kind of critique that is performed is not irrelevant. I want to nurture what Staunæs (2016: 66-67) calls an affirmative critique, whose ambition is *not* to reflect 'reality'. Instead, the purpose of norm critique is to 'reconfigure the world', i.e. a practice of worldmaking in the sense that the critical aspect is about bringing to life co-existing organisational realities. Citing Taguchi, Staunæs (2016: 39) explains how affirmative critique is about 'performing a critical tracing of normative articulations and practices on a field of thinking, as well as an experimental mapping exercise that might help us narrate the reality in question differently'. Defined this way, the aim of norm critique is *not* to pass judgement in terms of good or bad, right or wrong, true or false. Rather, the purpose is to take queer postures to overcome dualistic ontological territories, showing contingency, without necessarily determining a specific direction.

Practising affirmative critique of organisational norms has, for my part, on several occasions prompted feelings of falling short as well as an urge to succumb to the expectations from participants to provide all the 'right' answers, 'quick fixes', 'best practices' and 'solutions' to 'their' problems, or what is problematised. However, norm critique is about, as Foucault would phrase it, not being governed quite so much (Butler, 2004). The critique can therefore *not* be formulated in disconnection of what it is critiquing, since it is always-already a critique of something. It should be understood as situated and relational, as it does *not* emerge out of nowhere; it comes from somewhere, this somewhere being given situations and the specific practices that the two case organisations are queering. The remainder of this paper provides the context of the study by presenting the two case organisations, whose norm-critical workshops are shown to affirm ephemeral moments of intersectionality. The empirical insights are, eventually, discussed in relation to the

kind of affirmative norm critique that is performed to outline some of the possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of diversity management.

6.4 Methods and background to the study

The argument in this paper is built with inspiration from participant observations of the intervention methods of two organisations in particular: Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling[9]. I will attend to each in turn. The case presentation should be seen as data in co-production (Ashcraft and Muhr, 2017: 18). By this I wish to imply an iterative process of coding as a practice that happened the moment I entered the field, that is to say, during the norm-critical workshops that comprise my data and not just after. Data collection and analysis are for the same reason not accounted for separately in their own subsections but will be elaborated on as I explain my engagement with the case organisations.

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[9] Besides the two case organisations presented in this paper, I have also followed the work of LGBT Denmark (observations of two pilot workshops). The organisation is developing an educational programme to ensure that Danish workplaces offer inclusive, equal and inspiring work environments for LGBT people. The project goes under the name 'Empatisk Arbejdsmarked' (in English: Empathetic Labour Market) and is, in ambition, similar to Stonewall's 'Diversity Champions'. Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Rikke Voergård-Olesen, whose work with promoting norm-critical practices in organisations I have followed ad hoc, resulting in inspiring conversations around the arguments of this paper.

Sabaah (meaning new day/beginning in Arabic) is a non-profit interest organisation that seeks to improve the living and working conditions for LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) people with minority ethnic backgrounds in Denmark. The organisation of minority ethnic LGBTQ people creates a queer posture, which, according to Just et al. (2017), interconnects performativity and affectivity, thereby enabling queer matters to matter critically because they offer a potential for alternative organising of diversity. For a graphic example, consider how the mere existence of Sabaah, which was established in 2006, symbolises the possibility of being gay *and* Muslim (to perform the intersection of what might otherwise be perceived as two mutually exclusive positions) at the same time, thereby admitting their members to understand themselves from other subject positions than those permitted by the dichotomies of religion and sexual orientation alone. Also, note how 'minority' goes ahead of 'ethnicity', which can be considered a deliberate norm-critical choice. It is the minority position that is considered to be problematic and not people's ethnic backgrounds per se. It is not one's ethnic background but how one is minoritised with reference to ethnicity (or perceptions thereof) that is the focus of Sabaah's interventions.

I became affiliated with Sabaah in May 2016, when I signed up for their project 'Outreach', whose purpose is to prevent stigma and discrimination against people with double minority status in relation (but not limited) to sexual orientation, gender identity and ethnicity by means of norm-critical workshop facilitation about rights, culture and norms. In addition to educational material, participatory observations and reflections from discussions and walk-throughs of exercises at the initial two-day crash course, I also draw on my own experiences of facilitating workshops as part of the Outreach project (12 participatory observations and counting). In doing research for this present study while performing the role of an educator in Sabaah,

I could embrace a more collective approach to reflexivity (Gilmore and Kenny, 2015): bi-monthly all facilitators meet to share immediate thoughts with peers to get feedback. Hence, my engagement with Sabaah is not just an afterthought; it should be seen as ongoing.

Viewing my fieldwork as a relational endeavour, I expected it to be counterproductive for me to record workshops because one purpose of such a workshop was to establish a safe(r) space for identification and for learning. This would potentially have been undermined if everything the participants said was recorded and transcribed verbatim. I therefore opted for note-taking instead, which was left to immediate recall (e.g. McCormack and Anderson, 2010; McCormack, 2012) due to my active participation in facilitating the workshops I observed. Taking notes during the workshops was not an option, as this would most likely have disturbed the flow of the workshop, with potential detrimental effects to the learning space created. In spite of the obvious possibility of me having misrepresented recollections, this potential misgiving is minimised by the fact that we are always two facilitators 'in the field' and take time to evaluate together after each workshop. These evaluations are also archived in writing and used for the follow-up meetings every other month.

My analytical interest in the intersectional potential of norm critique was sparked when reading through the sheet with comments from my co-facilitators, who seemed to have made observations similar to my own. Many of them highlighted how in particular one exercise – which the analysis is structured around – apparently enabled workshop participants to discuss intersectional issues but with organisational and societal norms as points of reference. The ethnographic method

of participatory observation is in this regard a deliberate choice on my part to avoid privileging the voices of my co-facilitators over those of the workshop participants. I agree with Yanow (2012) that the critical aspect of ethnography lies with its quality of being open to the multivoicedness of the research field (see also Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2008a). I wanted to experience the reactions of participants first-hand and in different settings, which is why I also immersed myself in the work of FIU-Ligestilling.

FIU-Ligestilling is a collaboration between three of the biggest Danish trade unions (3F, Dansk Metal and Serviceforbundet – all organising mainly skilled and unskilled workers) with the aim of promoting workplace equality. In 2017, they launched a three-year LGBT+ project (funded by LO – The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions) that aims at upgrading union and work environment representatives to tackle issues related to gender identities and sexual orientations from a norm-critical angle in order to prevent discriminatory work practices and ensure a more inclusive workplace. The data include six (and counting) participatory observations from FIU-Ligestilling. While Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling have dissimilar target groups, their workshops are similar in their norm-critical and dialogue-based approach to teaching, whereby attendees are actively engaged through various exercises designed to foster critical reflections around dominant organisational norms and how some of these can be needlessly exclusionary to some people who do not 'fit' or perform the idealised norms. These exercises, relating back to Choo and Ferree (2010), are used to draw attention to the *unmarked* categories where power and privilege cluster by way of having every-body experience the underlying dynamics of sameness–difference (Ghorashi and Sabelis, 2013) and related processes of exclusion–inclusion. These ephemeral moments of experiencing one's relationship

with the other guided my interest towards the argument for a norm-critical approach to organisational intersectionality.

Both of the above-mentioned projects had an outspoken focus on what could be labelled LGBTQ+ issues, e.g. the normative workplace expectation of sexual minorities coming out of the closet by actively disclosing (as opposed to passing) their sexual orientations. Yet, these issues were addressed primarily by rendering visible the norms that would animate such expectations, in this case a heteronormative work environment that keeps employees from seeing that, for instance, heterosexuals out themselves too. However, 'coming out' as heterosexual appears to be normal and therefore tends to go unnoticed and has different consequences (if any) in spite of being, in essence, the exact same action. Examples of heterosexual disclosures can, as also discussed during the workshops, be found everywhere – including at work, when colleagues talk about what they did with their families during the weekend, or when they bring their partner to work-related social gatherings, or when they have a picture of a spouse on their desk. Having norms as a common denominator also opened up an exploration of other and non-LGBTQ+-related issues, and how they relate intersectionally, as they became topical during the workshops. One example is situational ideals for what constitutes a 'good' employee or leader (e.g. Staunæs and Søndergaard, 2008a). Or, to give another example, emotional labour (e.g. Coupland et al., 2008): what feelings are welcomed and what are sanctioned and whether all employees have equal access to display certain emotions regardless of their gender identity or sexuality.

Next, I will show how the norm-critical workshop spaces cared for such ephemeral moments of intersectionality by means of embracing productive confusion, or what

we during the workshops proclaimed as 'loving provocations', to repetitively disturb existing normative paths of business-as-usual. This, in itself, involves a break with the performative/non-performative binary to open up the analytical playing field for a queer performativity that is critical by juxtaposing the poles; not to arrive at an alleged 'third' place, but to keep any such arrival in suspense, acknowledging the position of not knowing fully and instead encouraging curiosity towards what might come next – an ethics of hesitancy (Kofoed and Staunæs, 2015).

6.5 Two cases for norm-critical spaces

Having established a conceptual framework apt for showing how norm critique is, in its rejection of categorisation, always also potentially intersectional in its approach to organisational diversity, I will now illustrate this theoretical claim empirically by turning to the two case organisations: Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling. My analytical emphasis is on what I call ephemeral moments of intersectionality. I carefully convey the intersectional experiences presented as ephemeral to underline how they are context-bound and for the same reason do not necessarily last over time. The following should therefore be judged not with generalisability in mind, but rather on the value the insights bring about in terms of substantiating and nuancing the theoretical and conceptual understanding of the intersectional potential of norm critique in its oscillations between visiblising categories and, at the same time, transgressing them. The relation between norm critique and intersectionality is therefore one where multiple and coexisting identities can be examined in their simultaneity by means of understanding the norms and not necessarily whether the identities comply with or are in opposition to the norms. To allow the workshop participants to reflect on norms and how they interact with identities, they were all

invited to take part in an exercise, which was a versioning of a similar activity from IGLYO's (2015) norm-criticism toolkit[10].

Prior to the exercise, which I will get back to, we would as facilitators explain the LGBTQ+ acronym to the participants in order to have a common or shared language throughout the workshop. However, in line with Choo and Ferree's (2010) call for a design that will denaturalise power relations, focus is *not* on the minority groups of people but rather on the *unmarked* and privileged categories. In other words, a 'majority-inclusive' (Kofoed and Staunæs, 2015) design that also has the identified majority positions as object of inquiry. Instead of dwelling on LGBTQ+, thereby risking stigmatisation, sexualities and gender identities are explained with the norm – that is, cis-gender and heterosexuality – as a point of reference. Interestingly, the workshop participants tended to know all the 'labels' for the minorities (although they were not necessarily able to explain what the labels meant). In contrast to this, they tended not to have an equally developed vocabulary for the majority of people, the norm. What this initial phase of the workshop does, then, is to make the participants literate in discussing diversity issues in relation to norms, which allows the participants – particularly those who 'fit' a norm – to understand their own positions and those of others. I will illustrate this by giving a walk-through of the exercise designed with the intent to expose participants to the dynamics of diversity discourse in organisations, e.g. exclusion-inclusion mechanisms and the associated

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[10] IGLYO – The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation is, according to their own website, the largest LGBTQI youth and student network in the world, with over 95 members in more than 40 countries.

sameness-difference dilemma that can, as reported in Shore et al. (2011: 1266), lead to assimilation or differentiation.

All participants are asked to write down for themselves five identity markers that represent an attribute or aspect of their identity. They are told to select the identities based on how they see themselves and not how others might see them, in other words, how they self-identify. At times, we as workshop facilitators ask the participants if they think the self-chosen categories would be the same had they been tasked with categorising each other instead. While some participants are convinced that others see them as they see themselves, others believe that they are perceived differently. Regardless, they get to experience the privilege of being able to self-identify rather than having others' assumptions imposed on them.

A few participants are then invited to share their five identities voluntarily. At this stage, we also open up a discussion around the difficulty of finding and labelling your-self with the identity markers. What usually happens is that people who have experienced some kind of friction or tension or maybe even resistance against certain of their identities have little difficulty in finding and adding these identities to their list as important to how they understand themselves. In a network for minority ethnic women, they all easily shared how they see themselves as women and, for some, as feminists, then as mothers – working mothers with minority ethnic backgrounds and in-between two or more cultures. In another workshop a female participant shared how her being a mother becomes relevant in a work context. She mentioned the Danish expression 'raven mother', which is used to describe women who are perceived as neglecting their children and how she, in choosing to have a career alongside having children, sometimes felt labelled as a raven mother by

others, for instance when picking up her children from the nursery just before closing time. Interestingly, there is no equivalent expression in the Danish language for working fathers.

In stark contrast to the above-mentioned accounts is an example from another workshop where a participant in a middle-aged, white male (and assumed heterosexual) body proclaimed that the task was easy and that he only needed one identity marker to capture his person in full: his name. While this is the only time somebody simply mentioned their name, it seems symptomatic of how challenging it is for people who fit various norms – be these idealised forms of leadership or the colour of your skin, sexuality, etc. – to put themselves, categorically, into boxes. It is almost as if they have never been confronted with 'who they are'. It appears to substantiate what Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008b) highlight, namely that the categorical level becomes irrelevant and, as a result, is erased for people who perform and thus carry the norm. This is not to say that gender issues, ethnicity, age, etc. do not matter, quite the contrary, since 'irrelevant' in this case implies that fitting any given norm puts you in a privileged position where you remain unmarked (and unaware) and never get to reflect upon gender and other categories of difference. It is quite telling that those who find themselves in (a) position(s) where they, generally speaking, perform organisational norms frequently came up with identities such as 'the IT expert' or 'the funny guy' – what we could label as individual competencies and personality traits, which are often crowded out when you don't fit organisation-wide norms due to what Kanter (1977: 210) called the 'law of increasing returns'. Since, as individuals, minorities of a given demographic represent a smaller numerical proportion of the overall group, they each capture a larger share of the awareness given to that group. In breaking with a given norm,

the attention received is based on perceived difference in relation to that particular norm, which brings us to the next phase of the exercise.

Having shared their five identities, the participants are asked to remove four of them. That is, they are to reduce their multiple identities to just one – the one they find most important in terms of describing who they are. Many participants find this part of the task difficult, and the process is perhaps best described as inflicting violence upon your-*self* because it is too reductionist, the participants complain, to talk about only one category when you just presented your-*selves* through five and possibly more categories – and still the list most likely was not fully exhaustive. The process itself of boiling down the many and different identities (which also tend to vary depending on context, e.g. work-self or 'private'-self, as well as on time, since many participants relate to how they have changed and have not been one coherent self throughout their life course) grants non-minoritised people with the experience of being associated with only one label – even though there was more to them than, for instance, being a man. Moreover, being reduced to – and in the process made a representative of – one group also comes at the cost of being seen as a knowledgeable, capable and competent individual (Holck and Muhr, 2017), for instance as 'the IT expert' or 'the funny guy'. Majority norms force minority status to be recognised (for diverging from the norm) ahead of, for instance, professional background. Interestingly, following this exercise, some of the workshop participants who initially were of the opinion that it does not matter at work if you are LGBTQ+ or not suddenly expressed a realisation of why identifying as such can be imperative because of being cast as other.

Experiences of intersectionality surfaced particularly in those cases where the workshops had a large presence of minority groups. An example of this is the network in FIU-Ligestilling for minority ethnic women, where the organiser, who herself identifies as a woman with a minority ethnic background in Denmark, summarised her immediate experiences of the workshop as follows:

> The workshop inspired us to better understand some of the underlying mechanisms of discrimination that we, too, as minority ethnic women experience. We, among other things, learnt how to use the norm-critical glasses to become aware of discriminatory language and minority stress – a concept that ethnic minorities have been missing to describe the feeling of not being able to fully be yourself at work.

While the minority stress framework was introduced with reference to how the 'values' of sexual minorities are in a state of conflict with a dominant heteronormative (work) culture (Dispenza et al., 2016), the participants in the network translated this framework by linking it to their own positions not only as ethnic minorities or women, but also as women who are minority ethnic in a Danish workplace where being a person of colour (and your associated religious belief), not to mention wearing a head scarf, makes you stand out because you in one way or another break with the norms.

A concrete example of a situation that can lead to minority stress from not being able to 'fully be yourself at work' is when we in FIU-Ligestilling discuss recruitment and in particular job interviews and how the interviewer risks putting

LGBTQ+ applicants in an unequal position if asking about 'the person behind the candidate'. The premise of such a question is a labour market that is better viewed as a 'personality market' (Hanlon, 2016: 15) where the employer is hiring a private as well as a professional self. Asking about family or leisure activities will, in that regard, potentially force a candidate with an LGBTQ+ background to speculate whether to pass or disclose their sexuality and/or gender identity and how a disclosure may affect the situation. That non-LGBTQ+ people don't have to deal with the same concerns became evident during the discussion when one of the participants – after having argued that sexuality is irrelevant in a work context – suddenly realised that she actually discloses her own sexuality by listing her marital status and the name of her spouse (a man) in her CV.

Norms, in this way, become intertwined with power and privilege, because you can deny that a situation is problematic when it is not experienced as a problem to you personally. The interventions of Sabaah and FIU-Ligestilling are for the same reason not aimed at the individual but at the structural level – referring back to Rodriguez et al. (2016) – with emphasis on the norms of organisational practices. As in Janssens and Zanoni's (2014) study, the purpose is to rework and broaden dominant norms. The point is not that some norms are 'good' or 'bad' per se, but that they are material to people, whose manoeuvring capacity is affected by norms. The question is how some, or the same, people are privileged by certain organisational practices and work norms. Or, paraphrasing Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008b: 39-40), what types of people (subjectivities) specific norms produce, who is excluded in the process and how changes should be made accordingly. It is not the purpose of this paper to provide answers to these questions, but I will address them indirectly in the concluding discussion of possible implications of the suggested norm-critical method for research and practices of

diversity management. I will, particularly, do so by addressing the kind of affirmative critique the norm-critical methods performs.

6.6 Concluding discussion

I have in this paper theorised norm critique as queer performativity through a cross-reading of recent academic debates about queer- and critical performativity theory. With inspiration from observations of norm-critical workshop facilitation in two case organisations I have moreover illustrated empirically how norm critique, in the move from investigation to a method for intervention, may create a space for what I have called ephemeral moments of intersectionality. I have argued that this state of ephemerality can render visible a multiplicity of emerging and intersecting categories of diversity while simultaneously overriding them, thereby acknowledging difference without fixing it as such. I have, in alignment with Pullen et al. (2016b), suggested that the queering/queerness inherent in the norm critical method performs a rejection of categorical and binary thinking and therefore has a potential for being performative, critically. In furthering the research agenda of a norm-critical way forward (Holck and Muhr, 2017) for studying organisational intersectionality I find it relevant to use the remaining paragraphs for discussing the kind of affirmative critique, which is performed. The discussion should, in spite of the subtitle of this section, not be read as conclusive, but as reflections that can be conducive to future norm-critical endeavours – whether for research or practice or both.

As already proposed, the kind of critique enacted when being norm-critical is one of affirmation, by which I, following the work of Raffnsøe (2017), want to convey a critique that emanates and unfolds from and is situated in the field that it assesses.

It can be distinguished (although not separated entirely) from negative criticism (Bargetz, 2015), which is perhaps best explained with reference to Sedgwick's (2003) paranoid reading, whose mode of criticism would be to expose the truths of inequality regimes in organisational settings – as intersectionality studies has been successful at doing. But as Sedgwick (2003: 130) also mentions herself, 'paranoia knows some things well and others poorly', the point being, that there is a need for oscillating between paranoid and what she terms reparative readings. The latter is what I describe as affirmative critique. The norm-critical methods observed in this paper appear to be reparative, since they affirm tendencies already present in the learning spaces created and takes seriously the situation (of the people) that it critiques and whose practices it has as its ambition to intervene. It affirms existing dispositions and asks 'what if' by means of exploring what would happen if, for instance, a job interview were done in a slightly different fashion. Thus, the criteria for performing the critique are produced along the way.

To elaborate further on this affirmative quality to norm critique I would like to stay with the example from the analysis of a job interview situation and how existing practices may put LGBTQ+ candidates in disadvantaged positions relative to candidates that do not identify as LGBTQ+ due to heteronormative expectations and organisational preoccupation with hiring people that live interesting lives outside work. With the publication of this paper I have entered the second year of my collaboration with the two case-organisations. Hence, my role as a researcher is not simply to enter the field, criticise it at an assumed distance, and then to leave it. Rather, I assume responsibility for cultivating the power of the imaginary, for following and narrating different trajectories. By engaging myself in the workshop participants' everyday practices I can care for and nurture critical reflection of normative conditions and support incremental changes by means of broadening the

norms. However, the purpose of the critique is *not* for me in my dual role as researcher and workshop facilitator to leave the participants with an assumed solution to how to tackle issues related to disclosure of a candidate's sexual orientation during an interview. Quite the contrary: the idea of the norm-critical method being affirmative is to connote its adventurous approach of meeting the participants where they are to explore, together, how to work with what they are already doing but in a different way.

The performativity of norm critique becomes dispersed and co-produced. In its second year the project in FIU-Ligestilling is, for example, supposed to broaden the norms for organising with the participants to avoid practices that stage disclosure of minorities' sexual orientations and/or gender identities. Since the process of either coming out or remaining closeted can be seen as relational (e.g. Hoel et al., 2014) the way interviewers phrase questions and arrive at their own conclusions plays a non-trivial role in conditioning whether LGBTQ+ people can be open or not. Disclosure becomes a *re*action, as LGBTQ+ people have little agency in determining if and when they want to come out of (assumed) heterosexuality. However, the message from FIU-Ligestilling would be that practices for, in this case, job interviews can be changed to prevent the situation, e.g. by using gender-neutral words ('spouse' instead of 'wife' or 'husband') and pronouns. As such, the task ahead is – in the words of Fleming and Spicer (2003) – one of 'externalising' intersectionality issues to existing social and, in a work setting, organisational norms in order to undo organisational performativity (Riach et al., 2016) by means of subverting the normativity that conditions (managerial) practice and dominant relations in organisations. Having norms as a common denominator for the intervention has the potential of spreading this undoing to other issues of intersectionality, e.g. whether candidates in female bodies and/or of a non-white

skin colour have to answer questions about, for instance, unpaid labour at home that do not apply to candidates in white, male bodies. This remains work-in-progress and new norms for organising are developed along the way. A concluding remark would therefore be that norm-critical reworking of organisational norms is a never-ending endeavour if it is to be queer, performatively, and avoid unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another.

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7.0 Article three

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Weird ways of normalizing:

queering diversity research through norm critique

Abstract

This chapter conceptualises the research practice of norm critique as an orientation in the world with methodological implications. It argues that to be norm-critically oriented is about nurturing bodily and spatial awareness. In analysing empirical material about disclosure of sexuality in a Danish workplace context, the chapter illuminates the diversity work of non-conforming bodies that inhabit normative spaces differently and shows how analytical attention to social norms can nuance perceptions about sexuality in organisation(s). It complicates common-sensical (mis)understanding of disclosure automatically leading to inclusion of non-heterosexual employees. And it challenges the explanatory apparatus of homophobia, suggesting instead that the heterosexual employees' double standards and derogatory language directed at their non-heterosexual colleagues are better explored as shaped by heteronormativity. The chapter reviews and situates norm critique within literature on social norms in organisation and diversity management studies. The author calls for norm-critical reflection upon researcher positionality, that is, the normative assumptions informing research practice, and, conclusively, evaluates strengths and weaknesses of norm critique in addition to discussing its ethics.

7.1 Introduction

How many times a day on average do heterosexual people come out of the closet, that is, disclose their sexual orientation or identity?

Norms exist in all social spaces and affect the ways in which people and things are organized. Social norms can be described as unwritten – or sometimes even written – rules and expectations that come to function as guidelines for organizational behavior. Norms are usually taken for granted because they appear to be self-evident, despite not being universally true. Over time, they gain the status of naturalized conventions and therefore become invisible, or at least difficult to pinpoint, in everyday interactions – until somebody violates a given norm, that is. In a classroom, the teacher usually stands on the floor in front of the students, and we do not give much thought to that norm unless the teacher steps up onto a table or decides to lie on the floor instead. Unless such a breaking point is reached, the norm will most likely remain unnoticed and therefore also unquestioned. It is, however, expressed through daily exchanges, be those communicative interactions or other forms of symbolic action, as well as in the underlying assumptions that set the premise for the exchanges. In this way, norms come to shape the tacit idea(l)s against which everything else is measured (Villesèche, Muhr, & Holck, 2018), and relative to which everyone else is deemed diverse and different. Behavior based on any other premise will, for the same reason, seem unintelligible, given that the behavior violates the norm – just like standing on a table when teaching.

Just because norms exist in all social spaces, it does not necessarily follow that they preexist the organizational behavior and practices they affect. Norms do *not* exist outside people's observance of them; they need to be reiterated to remain in place,

and therefore depend as much on people's repetition of them as people depend on the norms themselves to maintain this state of normality (Christensen, 2018; Just, Muhr, & Burø, 2017). In other words, norms are created as the result of repetition (Ahmed, 2006). However, once a certain mode of being in the world has reached this state of normality, it appears to freeze over and become solid. Take the introductory question above about heterosexual disclosure as an example. Showing, sharing and seeing expressions of heterosexual desire have become so normal that most people do not even notice them as instances of sexual disclosure. It may be that we witness these displays of (hetero)sexual disclosure, but in most – if not all – instances we would not recognize them as such, because heterosexuality is the norm(al);[11] the frozen, solidified mode of being and doing. With reference to Ahmed (2017, p. 146), we may say that heterosexuality as one way of residing in the world is experienced as fluid so long as you are going with the flow. If you are swimming against the current, however, the 'flow acquires the density of a thing, something solid.' Norm critique is an attempt to liquefy the flow again, because norms can be made fluid; they can and do change over time and from one context to another.

In this chapter, I invite the reader to think of norm critique in methodological terms. Or rather, I invite you to think *with* the concept of norm critique, that is, to think norm-critically. For that purpose, norm critique cannot be reduced to specific methods or a means by which to conduct research. Norm critique does not offer a standard box with a fixed set of ready-made tools waiting to be picked up and applied by just anybody. That would be to conceive of norm critique functionally

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[11] I write 'norm(al)' because I want to pique an interest in the relatedness of 'norm' and 'normal,' not because I consider them synonymous or interchangeable.

as a means to an end. I would prefer to cultivate a conception of norm critique as an *orientation*. It is an approach and a research process that prompts us to be critically reflexive about the ways in which we create knowledge. This applies to all aspects of a given research project, and in particular the underlying assumptions that inform research questions and design, including (but not limited to) choices of methods, theories and analyses – all the way through discussion, intervention, and dissemination, but not necessarily in that order. As I will show, to be norm-critically oriented is about nurturing bodily and spatial awareness. As Ahmed (2006, p. 3) writes, the way in which we are oriented, our direction, matters: 'Orientations shape not only how we inhabit space, but how we apprehend this world of shared inhabitance, as well as "who" or "what" we direct our energy and attention toward.'

Critique cannot be formulated in isolation from the object it critiques (Butler, 2004) because critique is relational (Staunæs, 2016). Norm critique, then, is to be critical of social norms and the normative spaces they give shape to. Hence the need to understand what norms are and how they work. This conception of critique, of course, begs the question: what is critique in relation to norms? Norms normalize or – to use another word – naturalize certain modes of being and doing, which are constituted through the exclusion of other possibilities. Norms foreclose difference, and create and perpetuate unequal power relations in organization(s) – inequalities that are repeatedly reaffirmed (King, 2016). To *do* norm critique is to denaturalize norms by explicating them, interrupting their repetitions, and by demonstrating their contingency. As Henriksson (2017) points out, norm critique first appeared in

LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender plus)[12] communities as a way of challenging institutionalized norms and the power hierarchies they form. The point is not that some norms are good or bad per se, but that they are material to people in the sense that they affect and work differently on different people. Clearly, a heteronorm (the expectation that everybody is heterosexual) works in favor of some bodies, while other non-conforming bodies may experience it as constraining. However, the same would probably also be true for a homonorm, say at a gay bar, where everybody is expected to be gay and lesbian and perhaps not bisexual.

Norms serve a broader purpose. They are the glue that holds communities together because they regulate our social life. If I jumped the queue in my local supermarket, the reactions I would get from my fellow shoppers would be an indicator that I had transgressed the norm that everyone waits their turn. Most people will probably agree that such a norm is not inherently problematic. You may even argue that this particular norm, what Sandel (2012) calls the ethic of the queue, is a good way of organizing the order in which customers make their purchases because it follows an egalitarian rationale – first come, first served – which bids us to ignore power and privilege. I cannot jump the queue no matter who I am or how deep my pockets are. Of course, exceptions such as priority, VIP and fast track queues that you can pay for do exist. So even though we may agree that this specific norm is 'good,' as it is a practical way of organizing customer checkouts while serving an egalitarian purpose, it is still violated on occasion and corrupted by money, power, and

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[12] I use the '+' to acknowledge gender identities and sexual orientations that fall outside the LGBT acronym.

privilege. The fact that we speak of such instances as violations or transgressions, however, tells us that the ethic of the queue remains the norm.

Contrary to the norm governing queue formation, the social norms I am curious to examine in this chapter are those that help sustain practices which can be harmful, for instance, when minoritizing and repressing certain (groups of) people.[13] An example is whiteness as a norm in relation to which people of color become racialized. Whiteness, as Ahmed (2007) points out, assigns race to those who cannot pass as white, those who fall outside the norm. The question, therefore, is why some people are privileged by certain organizational practices and work norms while others are disadvantaged. Or – loosely paraphrasing Staunæs and Søndergaard (2008, pp. 39–40, my translation from the Danish) – to establish what types of people (subjectivities) specific norms produce, who or what is excluded in the process, and how changes could and should be made accordingly. The same goes for research, where adhering to a given norm(ative standard) may result in the exclusion of other ways of knowing and hence other kinds of knowledge too. As Pernecky (2016, p. 196, my emphasis) warns us:

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[13] I deliberately write '(groups of) people' to hint at a diversity dilemma (Christiansen & Just, 2012); namely, that a sole focus on the individual risks losing sight of structural inequalities and discriminatory practices that may bar some social groups from entering organizations and participating on equal terms with everyone else. To focus on social group characteristics alone, however, risks reducing difference to innate, predefined categories.

By accepting without pause the ideals established as the '*norm*', one risks producing research in a mechanical fashion. The cost is both epistemic and existential, for one compromises not only the possibility of original knowledge but also one's philosophical and methodological freedom.

In other words, it is insufficient to project norm critique onto our object of study, regardless of whether we denote it 'the field' or 'an empirical case.' We must also render ourselves as researchers and our thinking practices as the objects of norm-critical scrutiny. For instance, I once supervised a group of students doing their master's thesis. They wished to interview women in a large Danish bank, asking why there were so few of them (women) in management and leadership positions in that particular organization. Long story short, the students ended up interviewing not only the women, but also the men in leading positions. The students also flipped the question by asking why there were so many men occupying the top positions in the company. The initial question implied that gender is somehow irrelevant in the case of men, who were not even considered by the students to be potential interview subjects. When the students became aware of this blind spot and started questioning its assumptions – by asking the men in management how they achieved their positions – not only the norms, but also their contingencies, were revealed.

When going about our daily work as researchers, teachers, activists, colleagues, and supervisors, on the basis of what norms are we acting, or from which normative positions? And do we act on the norms in such a way that we perpetuate or subvert them? If the latter is the case, do we, perhaps unknowingly, replace one set of norms with another, and with what consequences, and for whom? These questions are not easily answered – if ever. Rather, they provide an unceasing barrage of critical

scrutiny, not unlike the disruptive force of queering (Parker, 2002, 2016). While queering is not easily contained within a single definition because it (by definition) contests categorization, suffice it to say at this point that queering is at odds with the norm(al) and seeks to break with the normalized (Muhr & Sullivan, 2013; Muhr, Sullivan, & Rich, 2016). Norm critique is for that reason inherently queer in creating the conditions for destabilizing the category of normality, that which is taken for granted. In a sense, norm critique is what Ahmed (2006, p. 162) calls disorientation, as that 'which gives what is given its new angle.' We experience one category through its intersections with the ways we inhabit other categories (Ahmed, 2012). A graphic example of this in previous work of mine (Christensen & Muhr, 2018) showed, empirically, that diversity is nothing in and of itself, even though it is usually assigned as a characteristic of certain (minority) groups. With a norm-critical orientation, it becomes very clear that diversity has a relational property; that is, someone can only be cast as diverse in relation to a norm that fails to include them. But we can only see this when we step outside the 'diversity norm.' I believe this is what Ahmed (2017, p. 135) hints at in her dual definition of diversity work as *both* 'the work we do when we aim to transform the norms of an institution' *and* 'the work we do when we do not quite inhabit those norms.'

Breaking with the normalized hints at an interventionist ambition for norm-critical research, which is why in previous work (Christensen, 2018) I have argued for an affirmative quality to norm critique. This affirmative quality is a matter of moving beyond mere criticism as the practice of criticizing *what is*. Affirmative critique (Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016; Raffnsøe, 2017; Staunæs, 2018; Staunæs & Raffnsøe, 2019), as the name implies, seeks to also show *what could be* by means of affirming tendencies of difference or 'pointing out what could be different,' as Staunæs (2016, p. 67) formulates it. Thus, norm-critical analysis is not merely a reflection of reality

(criticizing what is as it is); it is also an attempt at world-making, reconfiguring reality. The norm-critical researcher is therefore not neutral. Nor is she objective. She is not on the 'outside' and does not passively observe like a fly on the wall – a metaphor often used for ethnographic work. She is, figuratively speaking, more like a cat, present physically, visibly, and audibly, detecting the environmental vibrations and sensing the atmosphere in the room with her whiskers. She gets entangled as she navigates her way between people, disrupting with a meow, the touch of a soft paw or, occasionally, a scratch to attract or redirect attention. A cat takes up space and explores its surroundings with curiosity, ignorant of any moralism. Instead, we may say that a cat embodies an ethical attitude of intimate relatedness with the concrete environment and with the particular situation it finds itself in. The cat uses all its senses to immerse itself in the world, not just the sense of sight to observe it. This operative metaphor for thinking norm-critically about the researcher suggests, in more conventional terms, both participatory and activist research roles, with the aim of not only investigating but also intervening. This, in turn, requires the dual researcher to have the capacity to affect and to be affected. Further, it implies that research can no longer be done at a distance, 'from nowhere' (Fine, 1994), as if a fly on the wall, or – in Haraway's (1988) words – using the 'god trick.' We need to consider with whom as well as how to engage when researching organizational diversity.

I return to this issue toward the end of the chapter, which progresses in line with the following three steps. 1) Having conceptualized norm critique in broad terms, I continue by situating the concept among extant diversity and inclusion literature in organization and management studies, discussing why it represents a critical contribution to this research field and why it should be applied broadly within it. 2) Then I elaborate on how to adopt and adapt a norm-critical attitude to a concrete

research area relating to LGBT+ and openness connected to gender identity and sexual orientation in Danish workplaces. 3) I conclude the chapter by addressing some ethical concerns as well as by evaluating the potential strengths and weaknesses of committing to a norm-critical research agenda.

7.2 Norms in diversity research

The idea of diversity and inclusion in organization(s) is not an unambiguously good thing. This is not because organizational efforts to become more diverse and inclusive are a zero-sum game, but because they are not necessarily a win-win situation either. For instance, if an organization wants underrepresented groups to step or lean in, it may very well demand of some of those already included to step back (lean out), thereby leaving a vacuum for someone else to fill. Indeed, in spite of the often good intentions that accompany the notion of diversity and inclusion, organizations continue to be sites of inequality regimes (Acker, 2006). Some managerial practices for organizing diversity are found to do more harm than good to the intended beneficiaries and result in so-called 'benevolent' discrimination (Romani, Holck, & Risberg, 2018). It is also common among critical scholarship to stress how diversity is either pushed into and kept in the margins as being inherently different from the organizational norm, or assimilated whereby difference is erased when people are expected to conform to and thus become the same as the organizational norm (Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013).

In the absence of norm critique, initiatives for inclusion run the risk of giving shape to implicit power hierarchies, whereby those who fit, reflect and thereby reinforce the organizational norms may assume the position of 'original' and can then decide to include others who deviate from the norms. So, on whose terms or premises – or

norms – are the inclusion initiatives based? Who is to include whom? And who is expected to do the diversity work of fitting in? Ahmed (2014a, p. 22) states that the emotional labor of much diversity work involves 'the efforts to minimize differences so that those who arrive can appear more "in tune" with those who are already here' – the originals. To use the term 'norm critique' rather than 'diversity and inclusion' is to insist on a renegotiation of that skewed or asymmetric power relationship, in order for all parties to be included on a more equal footing. This is not unheard of in the critical diversity literature. Janssens and Zanoni (2014), to give but one example, argue for introducing a 'new normal' by expanding views on dominant norms, in order to redefine alternative standards by which employees are evaluated. The point being that minority positions are included structurally in these alternative standards as the norms are broadened.

Analytical attention to norms is not an entirely new interest only taken up by diversity scholars. Alvesson and Willmott (2002), for instance, point out how norms aid in identity construction because norms feed into the social categories used for identification (see also Holck, Muhr, & Villesèche, 2016) and, I may add, for managing diversity as well as much diversity research. Further examples of predecessors to current norm-critical approaches include Foucault, who is known for his conception of disciplinary power that operates using the distinction normal/abnormal under the assumption that we are all deviant to some extent, and that we therefore strive to adhere to given norms (May, 2006). Similarly, Butler (1990, 1993) would say that social identity categories – and the normative expectations they give rise to – performatively constitute what they name or are said to describe.

A tangible and illustrative example of this is Ashcraft's (2007) work on occupational identity. She asserts that not only do people get a sense of identity from their work, but that work also derives its identity from the people it is normally associated with. As a thought experiment, try pausing for a moment and see what images come to mind when thinking of nurses, fire fighters ('fire men' if translating directly from Danish), cleaning staff, or leaders. The idea of occupational identity suggests that we can know the character of an occupation by 'the company it keeps' (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 6). This goes a long way toward explaining segregation in the labor market, that is, how certain occupations are linked to a particular gender, race, class, etc. The point is that 'occupations come to appear, by nature, possessed of central, enduring and distinctive characteristics that make them seem suited to certain people and implausible to others' (Ashcraft, 2013, p. 7).

Ashcraft uses the metaphor of a glass slipper to capture this process of normalization and state of 'false' naturalness – and to explain, graphically, how some people's bodies appear to slip more naturally into a given profession than others. The glass slipper encapsulates how some people are disadvantaged systemically, whereas others have an advantage due to the degree of alignment between occupations and social identities. The glass slipper is the normative, 'ideal' shape that a given profession such as management has taken over time, in order to custom fit the feet that have historically and culturally walked the office buildings. Perhaps for that reason, in the case of a male-dominated management and leadership occupation, a glass loafer would be more apt as a metaphor. Regardless of whether we call it a glass slipper or a glass loafer, the practical implication is the same: the metaphor provokes thinking at a structural level, unlike the common metaphor of the glass ceiling, which prompts us to think about the same problem (lack of women's representation in management and leadership) only at the level of individuals

(women) who successfully challenge the prevailing status quo. The metaphor of the glass ceiling as an obstacle put in the way of women who aspire to leadership positions implies that women do not belong in managerial roles in the first place. In contrast, the glass slipper/loafer metaphor appeals for norm-critical intervention, in order to size the shoe according to people's feet rather than the other way around.

In the next section, I present some of my own research material to demonstrate which (power) dynamics a norm-critical reading of the empirical data can render visible. The analysis is semantic and showcases the insights an examination of the workings of social norms can achieve.

7.3 The heteronormative workspace

The research material comes from my engagement with PROSA – a Danish labor union for IT professionals.[14] From 2016 onward, a growing number of labor unions in Denmark have rallied under the rainbow-colored banner during the Copenhagen Pride parade that takes place every year in August. In 2016, three trade union confederations launched a survey on LGBT 'openness' which was representative of

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[14] See the survey 'Ud af skabet, ind i kampen. Undersøgelse af arbejdslivsvilkår for LGBT+ medlemmer i PROSA' (*Out of the closet, into the fight. Study of working conditions for LGBT+ members in PROSA*, in Danish), where some of the analytical insights presented in this chapter have previously been reported. Available at: https://www.prosa.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Politik/lgbt/146545_PROSA_Rapport_2018_LGBT_medlemmer_WEB.pdf.

the Danish labor market in general.[15] According to the survey, 40 per cent of the respondents who self-identified as LGBT stated that they were not at all open about their LGBT status at work *or* that they were open only to a small degree. If we include the number of respondents who stated that they were open to some degree, the conclusion is that two-thirds of the surveyed population are not open about their LGBT status in the workplace. Of course, these numbers do not say anything about whether the respondents *want* to disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in a work context, or whether they prefer to keep this private, which – supposedly – would grant them the privilege of passing as the same as, rather than as different from, the norm.

I am not concerned with the phenomenon of openness in a work setting (see, e.g., Baker & Lucas, 2017; Bowring, 2017; Clarke & Arnold, 2017; Morton, 2017; Ng & Rumens, 2017; Pink-Harper, Burnside, & Davis, 2017; Tayar, 2017 for recent special issue contributions on LGBT in the workplace) based on the normative assumption that disclosing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity is necessarily better than not doing so.[16] In fact, one could argue that in order for a

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[15] See the report 'Måling af LGBT-personers oplevelse af åbenhed på arbejdsmarkedet' (*Measuring LGBT people's experience of openness in the labor market*, in Danish) by Epinion for LO, FTF, and Akademikerne. Available at: https://www.ftf.dk/fileadmin/Billedbase/FTF_analyse_nyhed/pdf_til_nyhed/20160 817_Notat_om_LGBT-personer_paa_arbejdspladsen.pdf.

[16] A recent report from 2019 titled 'LGBT-personers trivsel på arbejdsmarkedet' (*The well-being of LGBT people in the labor market*, in Danish) conducted by Als Research on behalf of the Danish Minister for Equality concludes that lack of

workplace to be truly inclusive it should be an option for LGBT+ employees to *not* be open without being excluded for that reason. However, in a labor market where the ability to 'just be yourself' (Fleming & Sturdy, 2009) seems to be an imperative, the possibility for openness among LGBT+ workers becomes a question of equal opportunity. Or rather, it is a question of equal access to 'externalizing' your identity, in order for that identity to imprint on and become a 'natural' or normal part of the work culture. Hanlon (2016) goes as far as saying that in contemporary society it makes more sense to talk about a 'personality market' rather than a labor market, because employers are increasingly interested in 'the whole person,' i.e. the 'private self,' as well as the 'professional self' when hiring. Employees are no longer regarded as merely labor in their companies. Employees have to be more than just their capacity to work (Muhr & Kirkegaard, 2013). In other words, they have to offer more than just work-related skills; the personality market also requires them to demonstrate affective qualities like empathy and 'smooth interpersonal relations' (Hanlon, 2016).

The conclusion I draw from this diagnosis is that work life, in part, consists of establishing and maintaining social relations with colleagues, customers, collaborators, managers, etc. based on shared interests that might go beyond what we, strictly speaking, may define as work related. An example from among the PROSA respondents includes a self-identified LGBT+ person who describes how her non-disclosure in certain work situations, and the fact that she does not feel safe to talk freely about her family life, not only inhibits the formation of personal

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openness in the workplace is correlated with a markedly increased risk of failure to thrive due to depression and stress.

relations, but also prevents her from embarking on some professional relations. Why? Because she uses 'the personal,' as she puts it, to bond with colleagues across shared work tasks and she does not feel able to do this with all her workplace colleagues. Quite apart from whether this is or is not perceived to be a desirable situation, it is the norm and, hence, affects those individuals who cannot or do not wish to abide by it. Thus, it becomes relevant to examine how different employees – in this case based on their sexuality and gender identity – relate to that norm.

I recall that the survey from the three Danish trade union confederations about openness at work made me wonder what the numbers would look like if we had asked non-LGBT+ people instead. I remember writing down the same question I also posed at the very beginning of this chapter: 'How many times a day on average do heterosexual people come out of the closet?' I remember that both my hunch and thesis were that heterosexuals do it all the time, but that such non-LGBT+ disclosures are perceived as the norm(al) and thus go under the radar, remaining invisible, unnoticed. For the PROSA research, we surveyed both LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ people.[17] Participants had the option of leaving remarks for almost all the questions, which resulted in more than 1,500 comments from roughly 1,100 respondents. I present and problematize some of these comments, which mainly came from non-LGBT+ people. The comments are not included to represent a state of affairs, but rather to *re*-present how norms linked to gender and sexuality form part of workplace culture, and how these norms appear to affect people differently

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[17] I was compensated financially by PROSA for designing the survey and reporting on the findings; however, in accordance with the basic principle of freedom of research and an agreement with PROSA, I retain all rights to the original data.

depending on how people relate to the norms. Given that the respondents mostly make statements about sexual orientation, I will from the next paragraph onward use 'heterosexuals' and 'non-heterosexuals' as analytical categories, so as not to falsely try to include the 'T' in the LGBT+ acronym. Queer thus takes on a double meaning not only as that which deviates from dominant norms; it also refers to those who practice 'nonnormative sexualities' (Ahmed, 2006, p. 161). As a guiding question for the subsequent analysis we may, similarly to Ahmed (2006, p. 1), ask: 'What difference does it make "what" or "who" we are orientated toward in the very direction of our desire?'

What took me by surprise, and what also shines through in the selected quotes, is how many self-identified heterosexuals state that other people's sexuality is none of their business, but … The heterosexual respondents, ironically, wrote a lot and were extremely opinionated about how little they cared about the sexuality of non-heterosexuals. One could argue that if the sexual orientation of non-heterosexual colleagues was truly irrelevant, it would not be necessary to stress this point. It would be a non-issue, which is also how the heterosexual respondents try to frame the matter, as exemplified in the four quotes below.

> I don't hear anything positive or negative about sexual orientation at my workplace. It's simply not something we talk about. (Heterosexual)[18]

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[18] All citations from the empirical material used in the analysis are my own translations from the Danish and are true to the meaning rather than the exact

Sexuality is not an issue you hear about at work no matter what your sexuality is. (Heterosexual)

Nobody at my work discusses [their] own sexuality or that of others. It's irrelevant to our work tasks. (Heterosexual)

It [sexual orientation] is irrelevant. It's just LGBT people that think they have to present themselves with their sexuality. Also, I don't present myself as 'my name and heterosexual.' How could that ever be relevant to my colleagues? I also have no interest in knowing the sexuality of my colleagues but rather how they are as colleagues, their professional level and contributions to the company and team. I will never discriminate based on sexuality but immediately make it clear that sexual preference is of no interest to me and close down that dialogue. I want professional input when at work and, fortunately, we do not discuss these issues [sexual orientation] at my workplace. (Heterosexual)

These four statements from heterosexual respondents indicate how openness in relation to heterosexuality (the norm) is not perceived as openness about sexual orientation. The respondents seem blind to the repeated confessions of

wording of what was said, in order to make the statements comprehensible in English.

(hetero)sexuality that are conveyed, implicitly, when a colleague leaves early to pick up the children because their opposite sex partner cannot go; when they talk about their honeymoon or plans for the weekend/holidays; when they flash their wedding ring or have a picture of their family on their work desk for everybody to see. Expressions of heterosexual desires are conceived of as normal everyday (inter)actions rather than as openness about one's (hetero)sexual orientation. Common among the comments is also the observation that non-heterosexual disclosures are associated with the act of sexualizing the workspace, which is otherwise assumed to be sex-neutral or sex-free.

Non-heterosexuals also take part in reproducing heterosexuality as the norm(al). Some comments made by the non-heterosexual PROSA respondents contribute toward reconstituting non-heterosexuality as a private matter that does not belong in a (professional) work context. For example, some non-heterosexuals state that they do not know if they can be open about their sexual orientation at work, as they have never tried to be so. They all phrase it in different ways, but the essence of what they are saying is the same: they – the non-heterosexuals – do not find it normal to talk about 'with whom they go to bed.' Therefore, when non-heterosexuality becomes topical in a work context, it shifts from a state of invisibility/non-presence to a state of dazzling visibility/noisy presence. If a person is openly in a heterosexual relationship, it is *just* a piece of information, whereas openness about a homosexual relationship includes an extra layer of information; openness in that case is immediately understood to be a (political) statement about sexual orientation. And when the environment responds dismissively, as in the four quotes above, non-heterosexuality is equated with the private sphere, thereby upholding the premise that non-heterosexuals are in a closet they can only come out of in a fashion defined and dictated by heteronormativity. We can therefore say that

this infamous closet consists of a heteronorm, which is the reason why coming out as heterosexual, as being the same as the norm, does not appear as coming out at all. The closet that heterosexuals find themselves in is for that same reason fully transparent and see-through, a glass closet, meaning heterosexuals are always already out and about, since the closet is constructed around 'their' norms.

In follow-up focus group interviews with some of the PROSA respondents (conducted separately for self-identifying LGBT+ and non-LGBT+ respondents with, respectively, seven and six participants in each category), we found that many non-heterosexuals search for a 'natural' way of coming out. This is also highlighted in other literature, where the idea of disclosing non-heterosexuality in a 'natural' manner is linked with correcting other people's false assumptions with regard to marital status (see e.g. Hoel, Duncan, & Einarsdóttir, 2014), for example if the wrong pronoun is used to refer to a partner or spouse. In this regard, a relevant question would be to ask how it could ever be perceived and experienced as natural to come out as non-heterosexual in a work culture established by a heteronorm?

Consider the two following comments from heterosexual PROSA respondents talking about their non-heterosexual colleagues:

> I don't know if Henning likes to get whipped, if Birgitte gets turned on by horses, or if Peter prefers to do 'the missionary,' and I don't want to know. Homos [*sic*] should not be put on a pedestal. (Heterosexual)

> Kennet likes small children, should he tell that to everyone? (Heterosexual)

These examples point to the existence of an invisible sexuality in addition to the exposed sexuality which is part of the heteronormative culture. The latter appears to be readily available if it conforms to the heteronorm, since heterosexuality is not viewed as such – a sexual orientation – and is therefore not experienced as sexualizing the workspace. Confessions about heterosexuality are for the same reason not seen as something private, inappropriately interfering with work. This is in marked contrast to the above comments about non-heterosexuality associated with sexual practices relating to animals and children. This comparison between non-heterosexuality and animal sex – and even pedophilia – constructs non-heterosexuality as a particularly deviating sexuality that actualizes certain ideas about non-heterosexual people; ideas or mental images that may evoke negative feelings such as disgust. In this sense, sexual orientation becomes a marker of difference that makes a difference in a work setting. Although far from all the respondents likened non-heterosexuality to zoophilia and pedophilia, it is a consistent feature throughout the comments that non-heterosexuality is conceived of as something peculiar – an oddity charged with negative connotations. It is not just non-heterosexuals who are brought out of the closet; once the closet is wide open, it seems to clears the way for all the stereotypical and prejudiced views that it was apparently also packed full of. The references to perversities illustrate how non-heterosexuality is turned into sexual practices rather than being conceived of as lived lives. Sexual acts and desires are reduced to one and the same thing.

The heterosexuals' comments relegate non-heterosexuality to the private sphere, thereby labeling it as an inappropriate subject for conversation in the workplace. In a work context, employees largely seem to be expected to take on a professional role that excludes their private lives. Sexual orientation could for that reason

potentially interfere with this professional role; however, this only seems to apply in the case of non-heterosexuality, as indicated by the next four comments.

> Sexuality is not something that belongs at a workplace and everybody should keep it within their own private setting. (Heterosexual)

> If you need to put your sexuality on display, if you for example as a man want to come dressed in women's clothes, then of course you should inform the company when they hire you so they can decide if it will affect the position negatively. The company has every right to make this judgment. (Heterosexual)

> The [sexual] orientation of my colleagues is 110 per cent irrelevant to me. But as with religion I don't want to hear about it or be confronted with it during my workday. It's the person's own task to tackle these issues with family and friends. (Heterosexual)

> I have several homosexual colleagues, but that I only know because we're also friends outside work. If that were not the case I wouldn't want to hear about challenges or problems that were motivated by sexuality or politics or religion. (Heterosexual)

As these examples vocalize non-heterosexuality as being both private and inappropriate in the workplace, it becomes clear that non-heterosexual co-workers

can only access professional positions by avoiding openness, which is conditioned by not sexualizing the work environment. Since heterosexuality is often a naturalized and integrated part of the work culture, heterosexual employees can normally pass as professionals because they do not appear to sexualize the said work culture when talking about partners, love interests, etc.

Many of the heterosexuals' comments from the PROSA resource suggest that non-heterosexuals ought to be less open than their heterosexual counterparts, and that they should show special consideration of the majority culture or norm. The subsequent two quotes illustrate how a kiss, which is not mentioned as being potentially offensive if performed by a heterosexual, can be regarded as offensive to the majority if performed by a non-heterosexual, in which case kissing should be limited or avoided altogether. To put it a different way, expectations toward colleagues seem to vary depending on how their sexual orientation relates to the sexual norm, since a homosexual couple showing affection for each other by kissing is not *just* read as a moment of shared intimacy. There is an additional layer to the information conveyed, as the kiss, in breaking with the norm, simultaneously becomes a statement about sexuality.

> LGBT people ought to show cultural sensitivity and limit public kissing if they know it seems offensive. (Heterosexual)

> I compare it to the sensitivity that gets Danish women to wear a scarf when visiting some Muslim countries. It's about cultural understanding so you don't offend others deliberately. (Heterosexual)

Taking these statements at face value, non-heterosexuals should suppress their difference so as not to disturb the heterosexual norm. The comparison between non-heterosexual people in Danish workplaces and Danish visitors in 'some Muslim countries' shows how non-heterosexuals are not considered to belong – at least not in the same way as heterosexuals do. The comparison treats non-heterosexuals as outsiders, aliens who are expected to assimilate into the existing workplace culture that consists of majority norms, which the non-heterosexuals are invited to be part of. It implies that non-heterosexuals are not already included. From this perspective, it is not the workplace norms allowing who can and who cannot be open that need to change. The degree to which non-heterosexuals can be open therefore depends on the specific company culture, which is viewed as immutable. As expressed in the comment below, non-heterosexual employees are expected to be highly alert to the situation.

> If they [non-heterosexuals] kiss during a very conservative company party it can be taken as offensive. But if it's a more casual barbeque party it can be totally acceptable. Sense of the situation is key. (Heterosexual)

The issue here is not whether just any colleague can kiss at a conservative company party, but whether a colleague who happens to be non-heterosexual can do so without causing offense. The responsibility for being aware of the different normative standards, as well as for adhering to standards that are unequal to those set for heterosexual colleagues, rests with the non-heterosexual employee. The responsibility is, just like the standards, individualized. This differential treatment that non-heterosexual colleagues may experience when, in effect, performing the

same behavior (kissing) as their heterosexual equivalents should also not be articulated in the workplace, according to some comments from the PROSA research. And if it is articulated, it may give rise to a 'backlash' or resistance in the form of complaints about how the majority has to adjust to the minority's 'special needs,' which is perceived as an inconvenience.

> I have no issue with people being who they are or if they fall outside the norm. The problem is if the rest of us have to be educated about it so as not to offend anyone. It's like walking on eggshells around LGBT people and you either need to know all the right words or apologize. It doesn't work out to be super sensitive at a workplace. Don't bring your personal problems with you to work. (Heterosexual)

It seems that coming out as non-heterosexual presents a potential basis for exclusion. The same holds true if choosing to stay in the closet. At the very least, we can say that openness in relation to non-heterosexuality does not automatically lead to inclusion, which becomes apparent when taking a closer look at workplace norms, in this case for sexuality. Importantly, an analytical attention to norms can keep us from adopting an individualistic and psychological approach that tries to explain everything away with reference to homophobia. It is not the purpose of my analysis to expose heterosexual individuals as homophobic. Rather, what I take from the analysis is how the heteronorm has become so deeply rooted in workplace culture that the heterosexual respondents do not even appear to be aware of how their comments display a selective incivility toward non-heterosexual colleagues. This selective incivility is not bound by the personal; it is shaped by heteronormativity (Einarsdóttir, Hoel, & Lewis, 2015). Similarly, a norm-critical

orientation allows us to examine how non-heterosexuals inhabit a heteronormative workspace differently. This brings me to some matters of concern (and care) with regard to the ethics of norm critique. While I admit that the analysis paints a somewhat monolithic picture of norms, I hope the next section will help to clarify the existence of constant, ongoing inconsistencies in the negotiation of norms.

7.4 Corporeal and hesitant ethics

From a norm-critical perspective, organizational ethics may be viewed in a similar way to Pullen and Rhodes' (2013) concept of 'corporeal ethics' and as a politics of queer resistance in organization(s). Corporeal ethics should be understood as embodied and can, for that reason, manifest when – paraphrasing Ahmed (2014b, pp. 224–225) – non-conforming bodies inhabit normative spaces differently. Think of the out-of-place female body entering a boardroom packed full of male bodies. Or of a non-heterosexual co-worker taking his husband, hand in hand, to the annual company party, disturbing the neat male–female seating arrangement as they sit down at the table side by side. Perhaps they even dare to kiss once at this 'conservative' party. Corporeal ethics is grounded in such embodied experiences (see, e.g. Basner, Christensen, French, & Schreven, 2018) and is therefore an area of ethics that 'resists the establishment of dominant norms and values' (Pullen & Rhodes, 2013, p. 784), which is also why it is labeled 'queer'. Ethics, understood in this way, is not the prerogative of management. Corporeal ethics is, quite on the contrary, the queer posture of being at odds with dominant norms, thereby pointing to power positions where privilege clusters. As in the scenarios mentioned above, such embodied critique (Ashcraft, 2017) is often pre-reflective and stems from those who deviate from a given norm rather than those who inhabit it. Ahmed (2006, p. 160) also reminds us of this insight when she writes that 'an effect of being "out of place" is also to create disorientation in others.' The norm-critical diversity

researcher may therefore deliberately choose to write from the margin or from a queer perspective as a guiding principle for rendering dominant norms visible. Trying, continuously, to comprehend this position through critical reflection is perhaps the greatest strength of norm critique and, at the same time, perhaps also its greatest weakness.

Norm-critical diversity research is a reflexive process and is, in principle, without any definite closure, in order to avoid unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another (Christensen, 2018). Reflexivity, according to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2009), consists of two components. One is interpretation of empirical material. The other component, reflection, may be understood as interpretation of interpretation – second order interpretation. Here, the norm-critical gaze is turned inward toward the person of the researcher for self-reflection, in order to examine one's own normative assumptions and how these may lead to unnecessary exclusions of some bodies and voices, or even certain forms of organization. Examples of the latter can be found in the literature on alternative and anarchist organizing that criticizes organization and management studies for privileging conventional work organizations and management at the expense of other types of organization – particularly those attempting to organize outside or resist the dominant norms of market managerialism and corporate capitalism (Parker, 2018; Parker & Parker, 2017; Reedy, 2014; Reedy, King, & Coupland, 2016). Norm-critical research, simply put, oscillates reflexively between 'home and field' (Ashcraft, 2018), in order to critically assess researcher positionality (Cruz, 2017). As a methodology, an approach to research, norm-criticality is about attuning yourself to the research material in a way that moves you from a level of prescriptive morality to a position of situated ethics where you, as a starting point, place yourself differently in relation to the empirical phenomenon so as not to decide presumptively what it is all about.

Norm critique, in summary, is to trouble, expand, and potentially rework norms. This calls for curiosity toward norms in relation to the research project at hand, which can only take place in the absence of premature conclusions and rushed actions. To be curious is to postpone judgment and avoid closure. A way of remaining curious is to practice what Kofoed and Staunæs (2015) call 'hesitant ethics,' for instance, when in the midst of empirical fieldwork. Hesitancy requires of researchers to intervene their own urges to intervene and, instead, halt and embrace the uncertain position of not knowing. Of course, in order to avoid getting paralyzed by dysfunctional reflexivity (the opposite of Alvesson and Spicer's (2012, 2016) 'functional stupidity' as the lack of critical reflection), the researcher must, at some point, step outside the temporal vacuum of uncertainty and replace it with one of (presumed) certainty, in order to produce knowledge and say something meaningful. As a norm-critical researcher, however, you do this while remaining painstakingly aware that your knowledge may foreclose not only other kinds of knowledge, but also other ways of knowing. And knowing otherwise may presuppose radical openness because critique in itself can be a form of closure – as can 'not knowing.' This brings us back to the title of the chapter: 'Queering diversity research through norm critique.' To explicate and maybe even challenge dominant norms, we may need to, as bell hooks (2004) suggests, 'move out of place' as researchers to write and do our work from marginal or queer perspectives. Pushing against, for some, restraining norms set by gender, sexuality, race as well as academic paradigms is a defiant political gesture, or should I say a queer gesture, affirming that which is at odds with the norm(al).

To conclude, I return to the question presented at the beginning of this chapter: 'How many times a day on average do heterosexual people come out of the closet?'

The 'right' answer is that we do not know. And if we did know, it would probably be a trivial fact. But think about it for a second. Heterosexual disclosures are all around us and happen all the time; only we do not notice them because to profess them to be heterosexual is to perform in accordance with the norm. It is what most people – the majority – do and therefore becomes normal to do. Everyone is presumed heterosexual until further notice or until they are proven otherwise. They are innocent until proven guilty. Turning things upside down, it becomes apparent that the right question, in the pursuit of diversity and inclusion, is not how to best help LGBT+ people come out of the infamous closet they are allegedly in. The normative assumption that everyone is cis-gender and heterosexual until proven otherwise is what seems to confine LGBT+ people to a closet in the first place. Consequently, LGBT+ people are expected to come out of this closet. Norm critique helps us to rephrase our research questions, so we can instead ask what norms the closet is made of and how we may deconstruct or tear down that closet altogether. Norm-criticality is a corrective to dominant norms that prompt us as researchers to realize what I also hint at in the title of this chapter; namely, that it is the practices of normalization that are weird, not those who deviate from what has become normal(ized). Thus, adopting a norm-critical approach is to destabilize naturalness in diversity research and management because you pull yourself out of the norm, thereby revealing this category of normality. In doing so, you may realize that, akin to Sedgwick's (1990) epistemology of the closet, being open, in public, about LGBT+ status only becomes problematic because historically it was constructed as something private, as something closeted.

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8.0 Article four

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Orange feelings and reparative readings, or how I learned to know alternative organization at Roskilde Festival

Abstract

Taking inspiration from Sedgwick (2002), I argue that a turn towards alternative organization(s) must be accompanied by a concurrent turn towards a reparative methodology, in order that critical scholars are able to know an alternative. Based on my engagement with Roskilde Festival, I show how easily critical studies become paranoid, precluding surprise and, in turn, alternative understandings, as well as alternative things to understand. Whereas paranoid critical inquiry is informed by the hermeneutics of suspicion, I suggest that reparative readings may come from a place of wonder (MacLure 2013a, 2013b). This article contributes to debates in critical management studies about the purpose of and possibility for critical engagement with organizations. The contribution is twofold. First, by sharing ethnographic moments that mattered to me in their affective capacity to have me experience wonder about critical engagement, I show how a paranoid reader may become reparatively positioned. Second, I show what knowledge may be produced through reparative readings. I then conclude by considering what reparative knowing does.

8.1 Vignette: A race for space

I find myself surrounded by hundreds of volunteers sharing my excitement as we wait for the big moment. I'm wearing an orange vest; on top of my head there's a flower wreath, as is custom in the team I belong to. The air is hot and the sweating bodies around me only contribute to the heat. As a group, we are separated by a fence from another crowd of people. Thousands of them. Each and every one eagerly waiting for the fence to come down – the big moment when the wait is finally over, and they can make a run for the best spots for their tents at the festival site.

It is not only the air that is dry; the dirt is too. Denmark has, like many other places in Europe this summer, suffered from unusually extreme heat with no rain for several months. As the signal is sounded and the masses begin to move, dust swirls up into the air, leaving a trail behind as the area is overrun. A volunteer describes the scene that plays out in front of us as watching cows grazing for the first time, following a long winter in the barns. However, the imagery that comes to my mind is the stampede scene from Disney's *The Lion King*. The earth trembles as hordes of people rush wildly in the same direction towards the camp areas that are up for grabs.

As is tradition, I join my fellow volunteers in cheering as the crowd of people gets closer to us, using up all available space. My instinct tells me to back off a little, to maintain a safe distance so as not to get

swallowed up by the moving masses. I almost do, as a physical reflex, but my mind reasons otherwise and I stand my ground.

A few moments earlier, when the first bodies started their sprint, it seemed as if they were spearheading the flock. Now there appear to be countless numbers of bodies joining in, giving shape to a wave, which carries, then pushes the bodies in front of them. There is simply no stopping the surge; it just keeps going until there are no more bodies to get dragged along, until the waiting area is vacated completely and the only signs of the bodies' occupation left are plastic bags flying in the wind above broken camping chairs, empty beer cans and other belongings left behind as rubbish.

The longer I watch, the more obvious to me it becomes that I am, of course, not witnessing a pack of wildebeests. The person next to me explains that if I look carefully, I can observe tactical, collaborative behaviour from people that form distinguishable sub-groups, clearly working together to survive. I am told that by now the fastest runners have made their way to reserve their desired camping spots, carrying only light items, such as pegs and tent canvases. My fellow volunteer points out two runners in the crowd going against the stream to regroup with a number of others carrying the heavy load – speakers, crates of beer and other camping supplies. While the sprinters are fast over shorter distances, the runners – going back and forth from the newly established camp and the rearguard – have to have stamina, to be able to cover the distance with full packs several times.

It is survival of the fittest. Or so it seems. Maybe, it is survival of the fastest and the strongest. When I leave, after several minutes once the crowd has dispersed, I see a woman to one side of the newly trodden path. I can tell from her body language that she is in pain. She is looked after by a medical professional checking her ankle. How dreadful that people have to get hurt, I think to myself. My flickering gaze spots something that was not here a few minutes ago. A temporary tent city on the rise, with tens of thousands of inhabitants. The empty field transformed. How wonderful that out of nothing emerges something![19]

8.2 Introduction

8.2.1 The case organization of Roskilde Festival

This is Roskilde Festival: an annual music, arts and activism event that, with its eight stages and over 200 acts, attracts 130,000 participants. The main stage at Roskilde Festival, the Orange Stage, has become the symbol of the festival, which for that reason is also associated with the colour orange. And at the festival, it is common to hear guests talk about a special feeling – *the orange feeling* – which is related to the festival being perceived as a free space, a break away from your everyday, where you can explore different sides to yourself, in part due the subversive nature associated with festivals more generally (Toraldo and Islam 2019; Willems-Braun 1994). As an organization, Roskilde Festival relies on volunteers to

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[19] Please see a link to an eight minutes long video of the event described: https://youtu.be/-8fRYaDMVBI.

co-create the festival event. Only around 60 people are employed in full-time, salaried positions. The festival would, therefore, not exist were it not for the collective efforts of about 30,000 volunteers – out of which two-thirds are procured by external partner organizations – all doing their bit to turn an empty field into the largest festival in Northern Europe. The vignette above, to which I will refer throughout this introduction to 'set the scene', is from my first experience as a volunteer–researcher at the 2018 festival event.

Every year, for just one week in early July, Roskilde Festival becomes the fourth largest city in Denmark, as festivalgoers come to party and live together in tent encampments some 40 km outside of the Danish capital Copenhagen. Thus, while the organization behind the festival exists between each annual event, it makes sense to think of the actual festival as a succession of regenerative events (Birnholtz, Cohen, and Hoch 2007). The history of the festival dates back to 1971 – making it one of the oldest of its kind – when Roskilde Festival was originally created in the image of Woodstock and in the spirit of the hippie culture at that time. These historical roots remain the foundation of Roskilde Festival, which is non-profit (in Danish: *almennyttig*) and, therefore, donates all proceedings to charitable organizations and causes. However, non-profit does not automatically mean that capital and economic logics are ruled out of the festival organization. One could argue – as some in the organization do – that profit maximization (and minimizing costs) becomes a dominant logic precisely because everyone is focused on generating a surplus to support, economically, the work of other non-profit organizations they care about. The greater the economic surplus, the greater the social benefit.

I highlight the ambiguity in Roskilde Festival's status as a non-profit organization because, with this article, I want to explore alternative organizing in the form of festival. Doing so produces ambiguities, it turns out, or ambivalence in the words of Toraldo and Islam (2019, 315), who argue that the 'purportedly subversive moments of festivals could be just as easily imagined as ideological cover for a commodified production that entrenches and reinforces social circumstances, patterns of actions and social identities'. It is, to put it another way, possible to observe a number of tensions at festivals, including one between, in popular terms, reflexive social critique and mass spectacle. Substantial literature celebrates festivals as transgressive or liminal in their capacity to turn social order upside-down in parodying the established structure (see e.g. Bakhtin 1984). But festivity does not necessarily equal subversion (Willems-Braun 1994). I find these tensions between subversion–reproduction and liminal–everyday relevant to the tension between critical–constructive found in the field of critical management studies, within which I will position this article.

8.2.2 Critical performativity and alternative organization(s)

My research interest in alternative organization(s)[20] in general, and Roskilde Festival in particular, comes in the wake of recent debates in critical management studies about the purpose of critiques and possibility for engagement with organizations. This discussion has been reinvigorated in the past decade, with

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[20] I write 'organization(s)' to allow for the dual understanding of organization as (1) entities, referring to specific organizations such as Roskilde Festival and (2) processes of organizing.

repeated calls for critical performativity (Spicer, Alvesson, and Kärreman 2009, 2016) that roughly translate into a research agenda for making critical theory influential in organizations (Gond et al. 2016). In diametrical opposition to this idea of critical *engagement* is the notion of critical *distance* and the conducting of research with a non-performative intent (Fournier and Grey 2000). This non-performative intent (also referred to as 'anti-performative') is a stance against knowledge production that comes to serve economic ends exclusively (Cabantous et al. 2016) and is as such not a stance against engagement per se. Nevertheless, the debate appears to have evolved into a Gordian knot, not least because published examples of critical management studies scholars working to intervene actively in organization(s) are still rare (King 2015).

While some argue that it is indeed possible to mobilize critical insights with performative effects for organizational practice and managerial discourse as an engaged, practical endeavour (Reedy and King 2019; Christensen 2018; Ashcraft and Muhr 2018; Cabantous et al. 2016; Riach, Rumens, and Tyler 2016; Nentwich, Özbilgin, and Tatli 2015; Wickert and Schaefer 2014). others criticize the efforts for remaining extremely theoretical, idealistic and, hence, too optimistic, with 'failed performativity' as a result (Fleming and Bannerjee 2015; see also King and Land 2018; Butler, Delaney, and Spoelstra 2018). In an attempt at mediation between the various positions – and to cut the Gordian knot – Parker and Parker (2017) propose a turn towards alternative organizations for critical engagement. The task at hand for a *critical* project that simultaneously wishes to be *constructive* should be to explore alternative forms of organization and management that struggle against 'a hegemonic present' (Parker 2017, 1366). Simply put, stop criticizing or changing the types of organizations with practices of which you disapprove; instead, affirm and elevate the alternatives that you find admirable – and use said cases to

think differently about and challenge dominant norms for organization. The dominant norm – or hegemonic present – that Parker (2018) describes appears in and through forms of organization that adhere to market managerialism and corporate capitalism. In studying alternatives, critical management studies researchers may contribute to building an archive of empirical insights from organization(s) other than the usual suspects, that is conventional work organizations (Reedy 2014).

To make critical theory influential in organizations, Parker and Parker (2017, 1384) encourage critical management studies to begin by 'putting its arms around our friends'. To be able to tell friend from foe, Parker and others (2014; see also Parker 2018) suggest three foundational principles or value-orientations in the study of alternatives and what they are organizing for, so as not to judge or evaluate them based on what they are not. The principles are (1) individual autonomy, (2) collective solidarity and (3) responsibility for the future. Each of these categories is described with a number of sub-categories. Whereas individual autonomy is about the self, diversity, dignity and difference, collective solidarity is a matter of the other, co-operation, community and equality. The third principle is described as responsibility for the future, with reference to sustainability, accountability, stewarding, development and progress. However, even if guided by the aforementioned principles, embracing our allies is easier said than done. And an embrace easily turns into a suffocating grip that makes the exploration of any alternative short-lived.

Similar to Parker and Parker (2017, 1367) revealing the crisis that one of them experienced as a critical scholar when expecting to uncover oppression and control

structures at a sustainable financial service firm, I originally anticipated the worst from my engagement with Roskilde Festival. In the vignette that opens this article, I initially scrutinized the event through negative affects. Thus, the competitive run, which marks the opening of the festival and, to many, is a joyous event, seemed to me to turn every individual against each other. I saw the worst possible. One of my fellow volunteers, on the other hand, saw something entirely different and called my attention to how the race also promoted cooperation among some individuals – arguably a good thing. An interesting question in this regard is whether these so-called negative affects are my own gaze or whether they are maintained by a researcher's gaze. Interesting as it is, the answer to that question becomes irrelevant, insofar as my research gaze is inseparable from my individual gaze. So, when I share the introductory vignette, I do so because it mattered to me in its affective capacity to have me wonder about the possibilities for my engagement with Roskilde Festival from a critical position.

8.2.3 The research question and structure of the article

When I first became affiliated with the organization, right after the 2017 festival, they deliberately asked me to present them with a critical reflection of themselves from an outsider's perspective and they were intrigued that I had never attended the festival before. My lack of previous engagement supposedly freed me from holding a nostalgic view of how Roskilde Festival was better 'back in the day' *and* from having a normative idea of how it ought to be different in the future, compared to the present. My alleged distance to the organization was assumed to allow for critical assessment. I soon learned that the Roskilde Festival employees were (of course) more than capable of critical reflection – without me holding up a mirror – and that they, in fact, have institutionalized reflexive (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009) practices, for instance, as part of a training programme called Roskilde

Leadership Lab. It is possible to problematize the institutionalization of reflexivity at Roskilde Festival – perhaps not surprising to the critical reader. I will, however, refrain from doing that. It is imperative to produce and disseminate knowledge about the potential and very real problems faced. However, as the editors of a recent *Ephemera* special issue about 'alternatives' warn us, seeing only problems 'in our current predicament is to preach a mantra of disempowering despair' (Phillips and Jeanes 2018, 698). My aim with this article is not to dwell on how something is potentially problematic but, rather, to linger with the critical potential in the organization of Roskilde Festival, how it may present alternatives to and, thereby, challenge various ideas of business as usual and – not least – how one may become receptive to an alternative.

In order to appreciate, let alone apprehend, some of these alternative practices for organizing that Roskilde Festival had to offer, I had to replace what I – with reference to Sedgwick (2002) – will call a *paranoid criticality* with a *reparative methodology*. Again, the vignette at the beginning of the article demonstrates why this move is important. I believe it says as much about me as it does about the event that unfolded in my presence. My co-volunteer experienced the event as akin to cows grazing for the first time after a long winter of confinement in the barn: all jolly, free and jumping around as if celebrating.[21] In stark contrast to this experience of the event is my own: as a chaotic, brutal and destructive stampede. I anticipate the worst by comparing the event to a scene in an animated children's film that has a fatal outcome. My position, methodologically speaking, affects my reading of the

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[21] Interestingly, the field in which Roskilde Festival takes place also hosts the largest agricultural and livestock fair in Denmark!

case and hence my ability to explore the alternative practices for organization that Roskilde Festival might have to offer. Hence, the purpose of this article is twofold in (1) showing how a paranoid reader may become reparatively positioned and (2) discussing the knowledge produced through reparative readings. The point I will make throughout this article, therefore, is *not* that reparative readings are better (however, that is defined) than paranoid ones, but that they allow us to do new, different, alternative things to organization(s) through the knowledge we produce: a point that, I believe, is at the heart of (critical) performativity debates. Taking inspiration from my experiences of two years of ethnographic engagement with Roskilde Festival, I address the following research question:

What happens if we move away from a paranoid reading towards a reparative reading of alternative organization(s)?

To facilitate the exploration of the move towards a reparatively positioned methodology alongside the turn towards alternative organization(s), the article unfolds in the following way. To provide any meaningful answers to the research question, I find it necessary, first, to examine what exactly can be understood by criticality as paranoia by reading Sedgwick (2002). That naturally leads to the question about what doing a reparative reading of alternative organization(s) entails. Here, I will make the point that, while paranoia draws upon the hermeneutics of suspicion (Josselson 2004), I assert that to be reparatively positioned as an exercise in replacing suspicion with wonder (MacLure 2013a, 2013b). Let it be said upfront: paranoid and reparative readings are both valuable, each in their own way, given the different knowledge they produce. What is particularly problematic about paranoid readings is that they privilege only one (negative) affect at the expense of

others. It would be equally problematic to simplify the reparative to a preferred (positive) affect. This article itself is alternatively organized compared to conventional journal publishing. I share and analyse ethnographic moments from my engagement with Roskilde Festival throughout the article to explain my own oscillation between paranoia and reparation. I develop a reparative methodology for the purpose of analysing one particular event at length to show, empirically, the possible insights that can be produced through reparative reading. However, my development of the reparative methodology is itself a contribution because it *complicates* academic debates about the critical performativity of alternative organization(s) by means of *extending* the turn towards the alternative with a concurrent reparative angle. I conclude the article by taking note of what the reparative turn entails, based on my own experience.

8.3 Reflections on theory and methods

> [F]or someone to have an unmystified view of systemic oppressions does not *intrinsically* or *necessarily* enjoin that person to any specific train of epistemological or narrative consequences. To be other than paranoid … to practice other than paranoid forms of knowing does *not*, in itself, entail a denial of the reality or gravity of enmity or oppression.
>
> (Sedgwick 2002, 127–128; italics in original)

8.3.1 Criticality as paranoia

I approached the empirical material included in this article by conducting a dual reading, following the idea that one can perform multiple readings of the same data (Martin 1990), provided that one does not inhabit an incapacitating paranoid

position. To do a more-than-paranoid reading, let us begin by examining what Sedgwick (2002) meant by paranoia and what it has to do with critical inquiry. Before Spicer, Alvesson, and Kärreman (2009) first called for critical performativity as a response to the non-performative stance in critical management studies (Fournier and Grey 2000),[22] Sedgwick (2002) wrote about the performativity of knowledge and criticized the way paranoia had evolved from a diagnosis to a prescription – in other people's work as well as her own. . I reference Sedgwick's essay from 2002 but, as Wiegman (2014) reminds us, early versions of the essay date back to 1996 and 1997. Thus, as early as the 1990s, paranoid inquiry had, according to Sedgwick, become synonymous with critical inquiry. She found it problematic that the two were equated as if paranoia was the only way of knowing the world. Paranoid inquiry should, she said, be viewed as one kind of 'cognitive/affective theoretical practice', one among other, alternative kinds (Sedgwick 2002, 126).

Sedgwick (2002, 130) acknowledges the merits of paranoia, which, as she states, 'knows some things well and others poorly'. Her concern is not that paranoid readings are somehow inferior to reparative ones, but that paranoia blocks what reparative readings may have to offer. As an analytical strategy or practice, paranoia is but one way of seeking, finding and organizing knowledge. Her critique is directed at the shift paranoia has made towards becoming a methodology – a shift that comes with the risk that paranoia develops into a 'self-evident imperative' (117). In simplistic terms, we (as critical scholars) find what we set out to find, with

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[22] This is what Parker and Parker (2017) describe as an antagonistic form of critical management studies.

little or no room for surprise. This tendency to pre-empt an element of surprise, Sedgwick explains, comes from paranoia being anticipatory.

In addition to anticipation, which keeps any analytical surprise at bay, Sedgwick (2002, 130ff.) sketches out four more features of paranoia. First, paranoia is reflexive, and understanding is obtained through mimetic imitation. Paranoia becomes both a way of knowing *and* a thing known and therefore blocks alternative ways of understanding, as well as alternative things to understand. Another feature is that paranoia becomes a strong theory through circular argumentation. Sedgwick writes 'strong' because paranoia as theory is ineffective in providing protection against negative affects, which become a mode of selective scanning and amplification that eventually proves the very same assumptions with which it began. In this way, paranoia effectively manages to crowd out alternatives to itself. Third, negative affects are listed under their own heading as a distinct feature of paranoia. Finally, Sedgwick lists faith in exposure as a common feature of paranoia. This is the practice of revealing the concealed, underlying, violent mechanisms or structural explanations for oppression, subjugation and dominance that hide in plain sight.

To show *the* truth (as if there was one absolute 'capital T' Truth) by means of exposing that which distorts reality is a paranoid practice because it relies on the idea of false consciousness, whether explicitly acknowledged or not (Sedgwick 2002, 130). Sedgwick spells out some of the main issues that come along with a practice that falls back on false consciousness as an overarching explanatory apparatus:

The paranoid trust in exposure seemingly depends, in addition, on an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings. What is the basis for assuming that it will surprise or disturb, never mind motivate, anyone to learn that a given social manifestation is artificial, self-contradictory, imitative, phantasmatic, or even violent?

(Sedgwick 2002, 141)

I would add that the paranoid trust in exposure also seems to depend on the ignorance of the people and organizations we as researchers engage in (who may or may not be considered the audiences for our unveilings, as identified in the quote above). The initial round of background interviews (20 in total) from my engagement with Roskilde Festival is a telling example of this relationship. In a group interview with two central figures, both with management responsibilities for human resources, as well as cultural and organizational development, the interviewees jump from one paradox to another. In doing so, the interviewees exposed prevailing and contradictory doublethink (El-Sawad, Arnold, and Cohen 2004), where mutually exclusive understandings of organizational phenomena seemed to apply simultaneously. They, in other words, did my job as a critical scholar by shedding light on inconsistencies between what is said and done, conflicts and power inequalities (e.g. between paid employees working full-time and unpaid volunteers working in their spare time). Here, it is worth mentioning that the power asymmetries are not unequivocally skewed in favour of one party over the other. Many employees think of themselves as volunteers because they do more than what they, strictly speaking, are paid to do. Some employees, however, feel unfairly judged by other volunteers for being motivated not by the voluntary effort in itself but by their pay cheque, which is deemed less legitimate (Hedegaard 2017).

Notably, both interviewees were very well aware that many of the human resource methods that they roll out in the organization subscribe to a view of human motivation ('theory x') and human nature ('homo economicus') that is different, or even opposes the view they would like to cater for: a (neo)human relations perspective (Johnson and Gill 1993; see also McGregor 1966 on theory y) where the volunteers in the organization are believed – and trusted – to exercise self-direction, desire responsibility and like to work voluntarily.

One topic that the interviewees kept returning to is the organization's need for planning, coordination and control due to the tight schedule – especially as the festival event draws near. This kind of visible management is diametrically opposed to the interviewees' idea of voluntariness as something where people seek influence and should be able to shape their own tasks – taking the voluntary commitment, not the organization's needs, as the point of departure. From this example, I take that the interviewees are already aware of the paradox created by trying to manage that which is supposed to be a voluntary effort (La Cour 2014). From the position of a paranoid critic, this form of self-exposure should, strictly speaking, be impossible because the consciousness of the interviewees does not know itself to be false – something that critical inquiry somehow has privileged access to discern. To the extent we can talk about false consciousness, it, in this case, appears more accurate to talk about *enlightened* false consciousness (Sloterdijk 1984, 1988). They know of the paradoxical nature in their enterprise, yet they continue as if they did not (Zizek 1989). In this way, however, false consciousness becomes a paradox in itself. To conceive of false consciousness as enlightened only shows how far critical inquiry can be stretched in order to remain comfortably within a paranoid framework.

In my initial engagements with Roskilde Festival, I was inclined to take the default critical management studies stance as critical (i.e. antagonistic) of the current managerial practices in the organization, which largely targeted the group of 30,000 volunteers upon whose labour the festival depends. During onboarding on my first day in the organization, I thus challenged the common conception of voluntariness with a view that the organization basically exploits the free labour of young people, some of which may find themselves in precarious situations career-wise and, therefore, in desperate need to embellish their CVs with relevant experience that they cannot get elsewhere due to lack of knowledge or skills. I also mentioned how I found it problematic that it probably was this (mis)use of free labour that allowed the festival to gain a competitive edge in a market economy, generating a surplus for the festival management to donate to charity and feel good about themselves as benefactors. Furthermore – and as I have continued to discuss with several people in the organization – volunteering could be seen as a sign of privilege, since you need some sort of surplus, resource-wise, to be able to volunteer your time. Here I am thinking of resources broadly as time and capacity: not only monetary. This would also go a long way to explain the organization's self-identified diversity problem, with the body of volunteers becoming uniform. They have even made a profile of the average volunteer: of Danish nationality, white, in her mid-twenties, living in the greater Copenhagen area and in the midst of taking a university degree. And yet, volunteering also happens to open up the festival to people that otherwise are unable to participate due to, for example, their inability to pay the cover price of the ticket.

Problematically, I found it extremely difficult as a critical researcher at Roskilde Festival to outcompete the organizers' own criticality. Also, through an unceasing critical barrage, I effectively distanced myself from my object of inquiry

prior to any engagement. Consequently, I put myself in a paranoid position, from where it was difficult to explore the alternative organizational practice of placing trust in volunteers because I was always/already trying to explain (not explore) how the alternative was potentially problematic. My critical stance became incapacitating. Constantly pointing the finger and remaining busily preoccupied with what my finger was pointed at, I could not at the same time see that more fingers were pointing back at me, exposing my own paranoid position as problematic. I have, at this stage, used the word problematic several times, and I believe paranoid reading can be summarized with just that one word – problematic. It operates through the process of problematization (treating something as a problem). And as Phillips and Jeanes (2018, 698) credit Einstein for saying, 'the thinking that has created a problem is unlikely to help us solve it'. Thus, instead of anticipating what to critique at Roskilde Festival before I had even begun generating the empirical material, I allowed myself to take pleasure and sustenance in the ethnographic fieldwork, which is what I understand by Sedgwick's notion of reparative reading.

8.3.2 The role of trust

I think of paranoia and its reparative alternative as modes of reading, that is, as approaches to the empirical. The point I am making in this article is that, as is the case for the paranoid, the reparative approach can be turned into a position. That means reparative reading is not simply a cognitive analytical reframing of events, but a repositioned *embodied* stance. In retrospect, I believe that the possibility for me to negotiate my own positionality (Cruz 2016) was nurtured by Roskilde Festival's trust in volunteers and in me as volunteer–researcher. They entrust volunteers with tasks and assignments that are critical to organizing the festival and, as such, to the organization as a whole. This almost blind faith in the voluntary

commitment spurs a sense of duty and sees people take responsibility to live up to expectations – and return trust. At least it did in my case. The Danish word for voluntariness, *frivillighed*, is composed of *fri* (free) and *villighed* (willingness) – i.e. a willingness to do something freely – also implying the autonomy or discretion of the individual to exercise their free will. One person at Roskilde Festival introduced me to a play on this compound word, claiming that voluntariness, when shown trust, develops into 'dutitariness' – *pligtvillighed* in Danish – a willingness to do your duty as a volunteer, what is expected of you, based on what you have been entrusted to do. On hearing this, need I mention that my paranoia had already prepared me to expose (neo)normative organizational control (Fleming and Sturdy 2009; Endrissat, Islam, and Noppeney 2015)?

At no point in my (so far) two-years-long engagement with Roskilde Festival have they told me what to do or how to do it. They trust that I can conduct my research in collaboration with the organization, that I reach out when I need help (they did the same when they wanted my perspective, for example, on the development of their first explicit diversity strategy), and that insights and findings from my research will be both interesting and relevant to someone and some part in the organization. Admittedly, this trust has been a little anxiety-provoking and I even had it confused with blind faith at times, but it also put my initial disbelief in the organization's reliance on volunteers to shame. So, instead of placing trust in exposure, as a paranoid reader would do, I began to place trust in the organization and its people – the same way they had shown me trust. I started to have trust in the (research) process, which to me became a matter of theorizing in a manner that could seem 'naïve, pious, or complaisant' (Sedgwick 2002, 126) from a paranoid critical stance. Rather than meeting the organizational members with assumptions and suspicion, I turned the suspicion towards my own beliefs and convictions. This, I

believe, is what Parker (2018) means by a researcher position of not-knowing and what Kofoed and Staunæs (2015) recommend with their ethics of hesitancy in fieldwork.

It is beyond the scope of this article to review the extensive literature on trust as an organizational phenomenon. Dietz and Den Hartog (2006) provide an overview of different conceptualizations, specifically focusing on intra-organizational trust as the trust shown between members within an organization. For the purpose of this article, I am content with the etymological and conceptual ideas about trust as found when looking up its Danish equivalent *tillid* in a dictionary. Here, trust is described as a strong sense, a feeling (an affect) of being able to believe in – to trust – or count on someone or something. To count on someone or something is to rely on that someone or something. Trust, in other words, is a relation: you trust in someone else. In doing so, you suspend your own suspicion, giving the other the benefit the doubt. This manoeuvre is not without cost. Trust can be betrayed or even abused. Showing trust is to make yourself vulnerable to uncertainty, since to place confidence in something is also to depend upon it. This reliance, I believe, comes with the possibility of spurring hopes and expectations in that to which trust is given. While trust, in my case, may have been what nudged me in the direction of other-than-paranoid ways of knowing, it does not explain how I went about conducting reparative readings, to which I turn next.

8.3.3 Towards a reparatively positioned methodology of wonder

If the suppression of surprise is among the problems of a paranoid reading, then maybe wonder is the way forwards for a reparative reading. According to MacLure (2013a), data make themselves intelligible to us in their own ways. And the way in

which we may sense this intelligibility is when becoming especially interested in some data. This interest does not come out of nowhere but is sparked by the glow, the '*wonder* that resides and radiates in data' (MacLure 2013b, 228; my emphasis), and which holds a productive capacity, due to the entangled relationship between data and researcher. Following this reasoning, the matter of critique is moved from the researcher to an entanglement with other matter, the data: an impossible move if disentangled through critical distance. Wonder is pre-eminently material and insists in bodies as well as minds:

Wonder is relational. It is not clear where it originates and to whom it belongs. It seems to be "out there," emanating from a particular object, image, or fragment of text; but it is also "in" the person that is affected. A passion: *the capacity to affect and to be affected*.

(MacLure 2013b, 22; my emphasis)

Wonder is, as such, a counterpart to reasoning through interpretation, classification and representation – what in conventional qualitative inquiry is typically (re)presented as coding. Due to its capacity to enter into relations with researchers, the best way to think about the wonder of data is 'as an *event*' (MacLure 2013b, 231; italics in original). Thus, wonder is an affect. However, it is not an uncomplicatedly positive affect. It can be a cause of astonishment or admiration, as well as a feeling of doubt or uncertainty. More importantly, wonder is the productive capacity in the entangled researcher–data relation.

To enter into a relation presupposes a researcher presence, an immersion into the field that renders mutual affectivity possible. Thus, to become other-than-paranoid I practiced affective ethnography (Gherardi 2019). This, to Holck (2018), is a matter of writing *from within* and not just *about* an organization. Whereas writing *about* suggests a disentangled and disembodied writing practice, writing *from within* entails researcher engagement, inhabiting the organizational space in order to get entangled with the data. The vignette in the introduction is an example of such writing from within the organization, from the moment of experience. It was this entanglement, the affective ethnographic endeavour with embodied apprehensions (Ashcraft 2017) of Roskilde Festival that granted me a position from which I could experience the wonder of my data and do a more-than-paranoid reading. Because a reparative (re)reading implies a repositioned embodied stance and not simply a cognitive analytical reframing of events (it is *both* a cognitive *and* an affective theoretical practice, just like paranoid inquiry), a methodology of wonder is necessarily also one of *embodiment*. And by embodiment, I mean intersubjectivity, in the sense that my own embodied experiences are understood not in isolation but *in relation* to other bodies. In her book about embodiment in qualitative research, Ellingson (2017, 1) makes the opening statement that researchers, whether consciously aware of it or not, begin with the body. As such, the body is my method and the site through which the situated self is experienced. To insist on this corporeality in affective ethnography is to recognize that organizing operates at a sensory level, irreducible to pure cognitive appraisal:

> [W]e cannot separate ourselves from our body: who we are, our thoughts, feelings, body, speech, response to others are interrelated and play through lived moments in which we try to make sense of our surroundings.

(Cunliffe and Coupland 2011, 69)

The inseparability from the body should be taken quite literally, namely that we *are* our bodies and that we 'come to know the world experientially as our bodies help us attune ourselves to our situation' (Cunliffe and Coupland 2011, 69). I will in the next section describe more concretely how I made my experience at Roskilde Festival sensible through embedded and embodied ethnographic moments.

8.3.4 Back to data

The wonder of data, as I have explored in the preceding paragraphs, implies an intimate relationship between researcher and data, which, I assume, is why MacLure (2013b) puts a hyphen between the two ('researcher-and-data'). They are not separate entities, meaning that the collection of data should not be thought of nor practiced as a matter of picking berries from a bush. Data are not 'out there', readily available for the researcher to gather. Rather, data are *generated*. Needless to say, having spent more than two years, on and off, researching, the vastness of my empirical material exceeds what can be included in this article. I, therefore, delimit my presentation of data to the material that has informed this present article. In addition to the 20 background interviews previously referenced, I volunteered on equal terms with everyone else. In other words, I practiced a dual role of volunteer–researcher. In my encounter with other volunteers, volunteering had been repeatedly mentioned as the right and proper way of experiencing Roskilde Festival and I assumed that being one of the volunteers would produce more meaningful relations, with 'natural' exchanges of information compared to othering myself as a researcher.

I have followed the organization since September 2017 and produced field notes from the 2018 and 2019 festivals. During my first year, I already had an experience that challenged and put my initial paranoid reading of Roskilde Festival's use of volunteers to shame. In the team I was part of, we hosted a group of young people with 'psychological vulnerabilities', as we were told in a briefing. Rather than trying to 'fix' them so they would fit a predefined volunteer role with pre-established ways of completing their tasks, this group of people could – as part of a pilot project – opt in and out depending on their needs and contribute however they saw fit. This flexibility in volunteering meant that they could participate on their own terms, which is another way of saying that they could shape the norms that governed their inclusion. They did not have to observe pre-existing normative standards for volunteering and change themselves accordingly. Rather, they were invited to help rework the norm, not only for *who* can volunteer, but also *how* one can volunteer. And as one of them is quoted as saying in a national newspaper, his days as a volunteer were his best experience with Roskilde Festival since he went for the first time four years ago: a testimonial that makes it difficult to be paranoid on his behalf. With the risk of getting ahead of myself, I believe that this example illustrates how festivals are marked by certain exclusions and inclusions (Willems-Braun 1994) and, more importantly, how they can be renegotiated through alternative practices for organizing volunteers.

Another experience that challenged my paranoia and had me wonder about the possibilities for other readings was my encounter with a camping area that goes by the name Camp Unicorny. Having followed the organization of Roskilde Festival in between the regenerative festival events (Birnholtz, Cohen, and Hoch 2007), a concern of mine was that I had come to know it exclusively through the group of

volunteers denoted as 'fireballs' (in Danish: *ildsjæle*). This group accounts for no more than 2,000 of the total 30,000 volunteers that co-produce the festival. But because they put in more than 100 hours on an annual basis (the minimum requirement is 32 hours), they also happen to be readily available for interviews – and hold the strongest views and opinions about Roskilde Festival, due to their dedication. In order not to privilege their experience over that of others (Yanow 2012), I actively sought out different forms of participation to explore the myriad of ways in which participants, whether formally volunteering or not, contribute to co-creating the festival, thereby making it their own. Camp Unicorny appeared to be one such instance, for reasons I shall detail in the analysis (reading) below. To that end, I make use not only of text, but also of images. These photographs, together with sound and video recordings, have also been used to attune myself anew affectively to the empirical material. It is easy to get distanced from the object of inquiry when writing. Listening to the sounds of music waves engulfing the warm summer night and watching the 'race for space' that I describe in the introductory vignette would instantly send me right back to the festival.

8.4 Camp Unicorny – a reparative reading

> It appears almost as if, at its core, the significance of festival itself is
> to give voice to these foundational problems of social life, to put them
> on stage, to enact once again, ritualistically, the joys and impossibilities
> of living together.
>
> (Toraldo and Islam 2019, 320)

When wandering the vast fields, with one camp coming after another and all with the same setup of a number of tents – frequently decorated with a spray-painted penis, the word 'boobs' or the generous offer of free blowjobs – organized around a white gazebo (if the gazebo is not torn apart by the wind), one area stands out: Dream City. The sign that marks the invisible border to this neighbourhood is placed on a small elevation in the landscape, as if aspiring to become the new Hollywood sign. The camping area that the sign gazes over includes around 80 smaller camps, with roughly 2,000 'dreamers', who work together to create Dream City long before the festival begins. They have privileged access and reserved the camp spot that they work on creating, and therefore do not have to take part in the race for space that I described in the opening sequence of this article. Dream City is an audience-driven community, where festival guests can shape the space in their own image, which is what is meant by them being dreamers: if you can dream it up, the saying goes, Dream City is the place to make the dream come true. To take part in making the dream come true is, as such, another way of co-creating the festival besides volunteering.

Picture 1: Dream City.

Passing through the Dream City sign – and the people hanging out to drink booze and listen to music on top of its letters – you cannot miss Camp Unicorny. Imagine two giant unicorn heads, at least two meters tall – one in pink and the other baby blue – with their horns touching at the tips, as if attempting to make sparkles. Then you have a pretty clear picture of the common area around which Camp Unicorny is organized. Unicorny started in 2013 and is organized by a Danish LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender)[23] youth organization for people

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[23] The plus sign is to indicate and acknowledge sexual orientations and gender identities otherwise not included in the LGBT acronym.

who break with gender and sexuality norms. The camp is primarily for festivalgoers that identify as LGBT+, that is, participants who are not cis-gender or heterosexual, but whose genders and sexualities differ from the cis-heteronormativity that quite blatantly dominates the rest of the festival. Camp Unicorny is, as one of the organizers told me, a separate space to the rest of the festival and its mere existence makes for an interesting tension – observable from a paranoid position – that to establish Camp Unicorny is to reproduce cis-heteronormativity and its 'other'. The creation of the camp makes visible to us some of the processes by which difference is articulated and organized at the festival – in this particular instance, through gendered and sexualized dynamics. It shows how the festival space becomes an informal discursive arena (Willems-Braun 1994) wherein social identities are continually constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed.

Picture 2: Camp Unicorny.

Camp Unicorny appeared exemplary of how individual autonomy and collective solidarity – two of Parker and others' (2014) principles for alternative organization that I mentioned earlier – can be understood as co-produced and not as contradictory, although that would be a common-sense objection to make. When identity is informed by a sense of group-belonging, in this example based on gender and sexuality, the organization that takes place at this level could be seen as a form of collective distinction. The organization of individuals, otherwise differentiated alongside the spectra for gender and sexuality, allows them to be different together and thereby cherish liberal freedom while embracing collectivity.

I decided to spend some time in this particular camp for at least two reasons. One is that it, in a sense, was organized for me, given that I identify as LGBT+, live in a non-heterosexual marriage and also academically have taken an interest in queer theory and previously conducted research with organizations for and by queer people (see e.g. Christensen 2018). As Ashcraft (2017) explains, our 'senses' of difference at home (and here I think of home as the place I live and also the academic institution from where I practice my research) affect our study of power in other fields. So, I was almost drawn to this camp in the mutual affectivity between the professional and the personal. Another, yet related, reason was to prioritize difference over sameness (MacLure 2016). Camp Unicorny stood out with its rainbow colours and by explicitly catering to self-identifying LGBT+ persons at the festival. The existence of Camp Unicorny instantly aroused my paranoia about Roskilde Festival as a potentially discriminatory place that, like the surrounding society in general, marginalizes certain (groups of) people who, then, have to work together to establish a so-called safe space for themselves. This intuitive response to the camp, however, also made it an obvious candidate for me to approach it

reparatively, since they clearly were organizing *for* something and not only *against* a cis-heteronormative festival space. They were creating an alternative to said dominant norm. Instead of reading them negatively as marginalized, vulnerable or weak, maybe I could read them as bodies working, with concerted action, to produce knowledge through differential experiences.

The paranoid in me was inclined to take the existence of Camp Unicorny as solid proof of exclusion, or at least that Roskilde Festival was not as inclusive as they would like to claim. If there was indeed room for all, why did some, then, feel the need to organize a separate/safe space for a group of people based on certain specificities? Camp Unicorny appeared to me as an area necessary only in consequence to the way queerness can be squeezed out of spaces (Ahmed 2019, 201). As I talked to the organizers, learning about the background of the camp and the different events they were organizing, I slowly became able to see the reparative project that the camp also offered. It was a community in the overall festival community. To the extent we may talk about exclusion, it was self-exclusion so that this particular group of people could renegotiate how to be included. The space was created in their own image to have their norms and values imprinted on the festival, even if only in a limited area. They arranged the events (e.g. glitter wrestling and a pride parade) that they would like to have. If they felt unsafe going to a party elsewhere, they threw their own party. In this way, the existence of the camp as a gathering of bodies appeared to perform an immanent critique (Staunæs 2018), with them inhabiting the festival space differently – immanent because the critique was not posed from the outside, but from within the festival.

As one of the initiators of the camp mentioned, the idea behind Camp Unicorny was to create a space where you are less likely to experience discriminatory language or treatment for as simple an act as kissing somebody of your own sex or diverging from conventional gender norms. The camp made a particular group of festivalgoers visible and showed how 'their needs' are not always included in the overall festival community. This visibility in itself makes for an interesting experience since it offers an alternative to more conventional organizations, such as workplaces, where many LGBT+ employees conceal their sexual orientations and gender identities because they feel out of place in said organizational contexts (see e.g. Rumens 2010; Rumens and Kerfoot 2009). One organizer highlighted how they had previously talked to the festival management about establishing shower facilities for gender non-conforming bodies so that said festival guests did not risk outing themselves in the shared showers or stress about where they belonged in the gender segregated ones. They, in other words, pointed to how the festival space was organized in accordance with certain norms of embodiment, a 'normate template' (Hamraie 2017) of the bodies meant to use it.

While many other camps were focused around drinking games and partying, Camp Unicorny based its socializing around good conversation – a break from partying – an idea that Roskilde Festival adopted in 2019 when they experimented with an alcohol-free Hydration Zone to establish a space where more festival participants could liberate themselves from the normative pressure of constantly consuming alcohol: a place that could initiate dialogue about party and alcohol culture. The practice of organizing a space with norms that are different and thereby challenge the dominant assumption that partying equals alcohol and getting drunk (i.e. binge drinking) was, in other words, incorporated more widely at the festival. Alcohol is generally associated with festivals and is also a pervasive part of the

organizational culture at Roskilde Festival. For example, the main building of the organization has a fridge with free beer (and soda) placed in the reception area. Also, it is not uncommon that people make presentations at joint meetings with a can of beer in hand. Once, during a Roskilde Leadership Lab workshop of mine about the inclusion/exclusion mechanisms of social norms, a participant said that one of the reasons he volunteered was that it gave him a legitimate excuse for taking a break from drinking because you are not allowed to consume alcohol or be drunk while doing a shift.

A few days into the festival in 2018, I joined and walked the pride parade organized by Camp Unicorny. One thing I remember most strongly, perhaps because it resonated bodily through negative affects, was the reaction of some bystanders as we passed through their camp. Although, for clarity, the parade did not enter others' camps; it followed the established footpaths. It is not uncommon, however, for the pathways to be occupied by festival guests playing beer bowling or other activities, thereby making it difficult for others to go through without disrupting their games. More often than not, the people playing beer bowling are a bunch of men and part of the game is to shout '*tigermis*' if an outsider (typically a woman or someone smaller in stature than the ones playing the game) dares to pass through, in which case the players will tackle the 'trespasser'. This happened in 2019 to one of my fellow interviewers (a young woman) while we investigated the phenomenon of transgressive behaviour at the festival (Christensen, forthcoming).

One of the parade organizers had to go ahead to ask others kindly to make room for us. So, some festival guests knew we were coming and applauded us or greeted us raising their beer as if to give a toast. My paranoid reading of that

experience immediately and automatically, as if by reflex, interpreted the applause as an instance of 'tolerating the other', rather than as an unambiguously good thing. Instead, the tolerance shown by the bystanders nourished my paranoia, in the sense that I felt like a giraffe on display, an exotic animal celebrated for its otherness. The bystanders, on the other hand, seemed to assume a position as 'the normal ones', who could show their sympathies with our parade, provided that they found us likable or somehow worthy of their approval – as if we needed it in the first place. My paranoia knew this feeling of being othered all too well and I could not, in that moment, position myself otherwise. This was a moment of powerful embodied knowing, which, although it might be paranoid, is an important source of knowledge nonetheless. In that moment, the embodied knowing could not be cognitively rectified, as it were. However, it does not stand alone as the only source of knowledge; wonder, as an equally embodied stance, may be mobilized to produce a re-reading of the moment and my original experience.

Picture 3: Pride parade organised by Camp Unicorny at Roskilde Festival.

Later on, swiping through photographs and videos on my smartphone, I felt reconnected with the parade, only this time I was able to experience it differently – maybe because we were back in the camp and the parade had culminated in a big party that had changed the atmosphere, the mood (Ahmed 2014). I relived the joy I had also felt when walking the parade: the joy of becoming part of a community. After all, it was my first time at Roskilde Festival and, besides the people in my volunteer team, I knew no one and was all alone at the festival. From the pictures, I saw something that my paranoia had not sensed, namely how signs and posters with slogans and catchphrases – often a common feature in pride parades – were notable by their absence from this one. From a reparative position, which became relevant due to the paranoid reading, the parade appeared less as sign of repression and more

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as 'a concerted bodily enactment, a plural form of performativity' (Butler 2015, 8). The assemblage of bodies turned into a movement as the parade moved in and out of different campsites, winding like a snake in rhythmic unison. Importantly, this movement – the gathering of people – could signify more than what was (not) said (remember there were no banners that called for the end of cis-heteronormativity and discrimination: no outspoken or explicit claims made). What mattered was that our bodies had assembled and, in doing so, exercised a right to appear and demanded to be recognized: a matter of 'queer use' (Ahmed 2019), as the parade released potential by putting the camping sites to a use different from what was intended.

The matter of queer use brings me to the specificity of queerness to the analytic – an aspect that thus far has been lost in my translation of Sedgwick's (2002) ideas from their original formation in queer studies to organization and critical management studies. Paranoia is not just a critical stance; it is also a lived one. As I have shown with reference to Camp Unicorny, paranoia comes out of an experience of negation, of a cis-heteronormative epistemology that does not know queer lives (Basner et al. 2018). Sedgwick (2002) reminds us that it is possible for, for instance, the LGBT+ community in Camp Unicorny to work with what they are, feel and sense, so as to generate an epistemology that does something other than negate them. As one of the organizers said after the parade, she first and foremost sees the assembly of the pride parade as a statement that 'we exist'. Popularly speaking, we're here and we're queer. She contrasts the parade at the festival to other pride parades, which she sees more as spectacles that only confront spectators who have already decided to show up beside a pre-planned route. At Roskilde Festival, they get a different kind of exposure because the other festival guests cannot just 'shut us out', as the organizer explained. The paraders' physical presence was an embodied way of 'calling into question'; it made them visible as they took

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up space in coming together as a group. And not only to other festival guests, but also to the festival management, who had decided to give the organizers of Camp Unicorny a financial donation in support of the work done by the camp in terms of ensuring greater representation at the festival. I will in the final section conclude on my reparative reading of Camp Unicorny, including what a reparative reading *does*.

8.5 Conclusion – what reparative readings do

> What does knowledge *do* – the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge of what one already knows? *How*, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?
>
> (Sedgwick 2002, 124; italics in original)

My aim with this article has not been to suggest that reparative readings are somehow truer than paranoid ones. The aim was to show how a reparative reading offers what a paranoid reading restricts and also that we, as critical scholars, need not always be taking organizations to task in order to perform our critical work. This, I believe, to be of utmost importance when engaging with alternative organizations such as Roskilde Festival. Of importance, and of relevance, to the critical performativity debates in critical management and alternative organization studies, is what Sedgwick (2002) succinctly relays in the quote above, namely that knowledge *does* rather than simply is. Thus, what is interesting about a reparative reading is what the knowledge produced does or allows us to do to or with organization(s). Let me, therefore, proceed by concluding what my analysis

(reading) of Camp Unicorny can teach us about paranoid and reparative critical practices.

First of all, both practices – paranoid and reparative – are 'changing and heterogenous relational stances' (Sedgwick 2002, 128). They are not theoretical ideologies, nor are they a stable personality type of the critic; rather, they are flexible and allow for movement between paranoid and non-paranoid knowing. Through this movement, it is possible to learn about the accomplishment of alternative organization(s) and not just what they fail to accomplish. Campness, as Sedgwick (2002, 149) writes, is 'most often understood as uniquely appropriate to the project of parody, denaturalization, demystification, and mocking exposure of the elements and assumptions of a dominant culture', which is to understand camp people as complicit with an oppressive status quo. The reparative lens offers the alternative reading that perhaps campness is not just a caricature of what is; it is also an attempt at making something else. Using Camp Unicorny as an example, I have demonstrated how a reparative reading makes it possible to appreciate what people positively commit themselves to. That is, in foregrounding not what they are against but what they are or organize for, the reparative reading accentuates what the organizing produces.

I have also argued that to be reparatively positioned is to make room for surprise without knowing whether the surprise will be terrible or good. This is another way of saying that your critical inquiry comes with less scepticism. Expressed through a neologism, we may say that to become reparatively positioned is to *descepticize* oneself. Let me pick up where the analysis ended, namely with Roskilde Festival's donation to the LGBT+ organization behind Camp Unicorny.

This funding strategy could easily be understood through paranoid knowing as *pinkwashing* (Kates and Belk 2001). In contrast, the reparative reading may seem naïve – ignorant even – in not searching for such hidden agendas. To be reparatively positioned is, quite literally, to repair, to amend. Unlike paranoid inquiry, which always finds what it seeks to uncover, the reparatively positioned reader makes the effort to 'organize the fragments and part-objects she encounters' (Sedgwick 2002, 146). In comparison to the de(con)structive tales in paranoid readings, reparative readings offer more edifying narratives. I believe this task to be easier when seeking that which nourishes and gives us sustenance. That is, instead of doing fieldwork to uncover what we find problematic, we may engage with organization(s) we find admirable. While I initially argued for a turn towards alternative organization to be accompanied by a concurrent turn towards the reparative, to be able to appreciate – let alone apprehend – the alternative, it seems appropriate to conclude that a reparative project is just as much in need of alternative organization, if it is to avoid being crowded out by paranoia.

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Acknowledgments

9.0 Conclusion and discussion

Having reached the conclusion, and having presented the four articles of my dissertation, it seems appropriate to revisit the title with which the dissertation began: *Norm-critical orientations to organising and researching diversity*. I could have used 'norm-critical *organisation*'. That would have been accurate given that I use the literature review in the second chapter to make the case that diversity is organisation. My decision to use 'orientations' was partly to connect, prospectively, with an argument made in the third article; namely, that norm critique is an orientation that shapes how we inhabit and apprehend the world as well as who and what become objects of our attention. 'Orientations' conveys how norm critique is conceptualised over the course of the four articles, resulting not in one singular orientation but a plurality of orientations that all contribute in different ways to understanding norm-critical organisation of diversity. Besides providing answers to the main research questions, the different orientations of the articles allow for discussion of a number of issues emerging from the conclusions that are drawn. I will therefore do both – conclude and discuss – in this final chapter, which ends with my reflections on further perspectives and future research avenues; that is, possible journeys ahead with the concept of norm critique as a travelling companion.

9.1 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question addressed in this dissertation consists of two parts: *How may organisational diversity be conceptualised norm-critically, and how does said*

conceptualisation contribute to the study and practice of organising diversity alternatively? I will proceed by concluding on each article in turn, highlighting how they address this two-part question.

9.1.1 Concluding on article one

In the first of a collection of four articles, I illustrate how the concept of diversity, in spite of its desirability, dissolves in the hands of managers (Lorbiecki & Jack, 2000; Schwabenland & Tomlinson, 2015; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). It may be possible to maintain clear conceptual distinctions *in theory*. Once put into practice, however, the concept loses its edge, its distinctiveness, as diversity is turned into an empty signifier with no corresponding signified – an empirical insight that contributes to the body of literature criticising positivist assumptions about any direct or stable correspondence between signs (the diversity categories applied) and referents (diversity subjects) (Dennissen et al., 2018; Ahonen et al., 2014; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013; Zanoni et al., 2010; Janssens & Zanoni, 2005). The article puts forth the argument that organisational diversity is constituted by *lack* and, consequently, has to be understood in *relational terms*. That is, diversity is nothing in itself; there is no diversity per se. The empty form means that diversity, in principle, can be anything. Yet in practice, managers assign particular meanings to diversity in an effort to make sense of it. As a result of that organising process, diversity is turned from nothing into something.

Since diversity is organised and, hence, understood around a fundamental lack, it takes the meaning of that which is assumed to be able to fill that lack. One empirical example from the article is women, who, as a group, are under-represented in

management positions in the case organisations. In other words, women are what the organisations lack, so women are cast as diverse and come to appear as such to the organisations. The point is that women are no more diverse in or of themselves than men. But women are perceived as diverse in relation to a given organisational norm that does not include them – in this case, a male norm. Theorising organisational diversity relationally as that which is excluded from the organisational norm contributes to answering the first half of the overall research question, that asks how organisational diversity may be conceptualised norm-critically. As such, this first article establishes a platform wherefrom the second article can shift the object of inquiry from perceived difference at individual and group levels to a more structural level with the focus on organisational norms (not diversity).

In conclusion, article one demonstrates how diversity is produced as an effect of the organisational norm that diversity management practice is premised upon. That is, in excluding its other, the organisational norm gives birth to diversity as that which deviates from and, thus, becomes different from the norm itself. One implication for both research and practice is that since diversity depends on organisational contexts, productive work with diversity needs to take organisational norms into consideration as these may obstruct efforts to generate change. How exactly such norm-critical diversity work can be practised is the subject of the second article.

9.1.2 Concluding on article two

In the second article, the essentialist approach to mainstream diversity management is criticised as it results in one of two equally problematic outcomes: the *marginalisation* of diversity as something inherently different from the

organisational norm; *or assimilation*, whereby differences are erased through expectations that diversity subjects will conform and fit the organisational norm (Shore et al., 2011; Ghorashi & Sabelis, 2013). The article adds to the conceptualisation of norm critique by rooting it in queer theory (Rumens, 2018a; Pullen, Thanem, Tyler, & Wallenberg, 2016; Parker, 2002, 2016; King, 2016; Ahmed, 2006) and suggesting that organisational diversity becomes noticeable as such in relation to the dominant norm that it is *at odds* with. It is argued that norms rest on a performative ontology, the implication being that norms depend as much on people's repetition of them to remain in place as people depend on the norms to appear as 'viable ones' (Butler, 1993). Consequently, while norms may become embedded in organisational structure (Acker, 2006, 2012), it is action – that is, the act of organising (Hernes, 2014; Parker, 2018) – that (re)produces norms in organisation(s).

As a product of organisation, norms are contingent, meaning they can be different if the repetitive processes of organisation are done differently. To that end, the article presents a norm-critical reflection exercise and shows how this facilitates a shift in focus *from the other to the self*. The exercise prompts the majority of participants who reflect dominant norms to become reflexively aware of how they relate to organisational norms for gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc. The article argues that *inclusion of the majority* is necessary for norm-critical interventions to break with *normalised* organisational practices that structure social relations, standards and expectations (Ghorashi & Ponzoni, 2014; Ashcraft, 2013; Muhr & Sillivan, 2013; Muhr, Sullivan, & Rich, 2016). The norm-critical method presented in the article addresses the second part of the research question and, thus, furthers the research agenda for a norm-critical way forward in studying and practising organisational diversity alternatively (Holck & Muhr, 2017).

9.1.3 Concluding on article three

Article one theorises and shows empirically how diversity is *excessive* in the sense that there is an element to it that escapes signification and, thus, managers' grasp of it. Through analysis of non-heterosexual disclosures in workplace organisations, the third article exhibits how the excess in diversity is related to *corporeality* (Ellingson, 2017). The article presents the argument that to come out of the closet as not heterosexual is to break with the boundaries of a heteronorm. In this way, non-heterosexual bodies end up surpassing the usual, proper, specified limits of that norm, which, as the analysis also displays, is experienced as excessive from a heteronormative vantage point because non-heterosexuality is seen as spilling over and sexualising the organisation excessively. Whereas the second article explores the diversity work of *changing* organisational norms, article three showcases the diversity work done by nonconforming bodies when *inhabiting* existing normative organisational spaces differently (Ahmed, 2017). The argument is this: in encountering organisational norms that do not include them, diversity subjects are likely to be aware of these specific norms (that remain largely unknown to those accommodated by them) and may, therefore, be able to point out *unmarked categories* of power and privilege in organisation(s) (Haraway, 1988; Choo & Feree, 2010; McIntosh, 2012; Case et al., 2012).

The third article contributes to a norm-critical conceptualisation of organisational diversity by arguing that norm critique, methodologically speaking, cannot be reduced to a single method with which to conduct research and/or organise diversity. Norm critique is certainly a method, as shown in the second article, but it is also an *orientation* in the world (Ahmed, 2006). Thus, to prevent the unreflexive replacement of one set of norms with another, norm critique must also examine the self of the researcher or practitioner to critically assess normative assumptions. The

analysis in the article contributes to critical literature on inclusion (Oswick & Noon, 2014; Roberson, 2006) in that it complicates the commonsensical belief that disclosure and openness automatically lead to inclusion for subjects that are minoritised based on their sexuality. That would be inclusion within pre-existing organisational norms. At the same time, the analysis challenges the 'strong theory' (Sedgwick, 2002) of homophobia. Notions of inclusion and homophobia individualise (and, in the case of the latter, psychologise) the problem of exclusion. Norm critique, in contrast, locates the problem in the sociality of organisational norms – in this case, a heteronorm. As a consequence of this, the solution is also found in destabilising that norm.
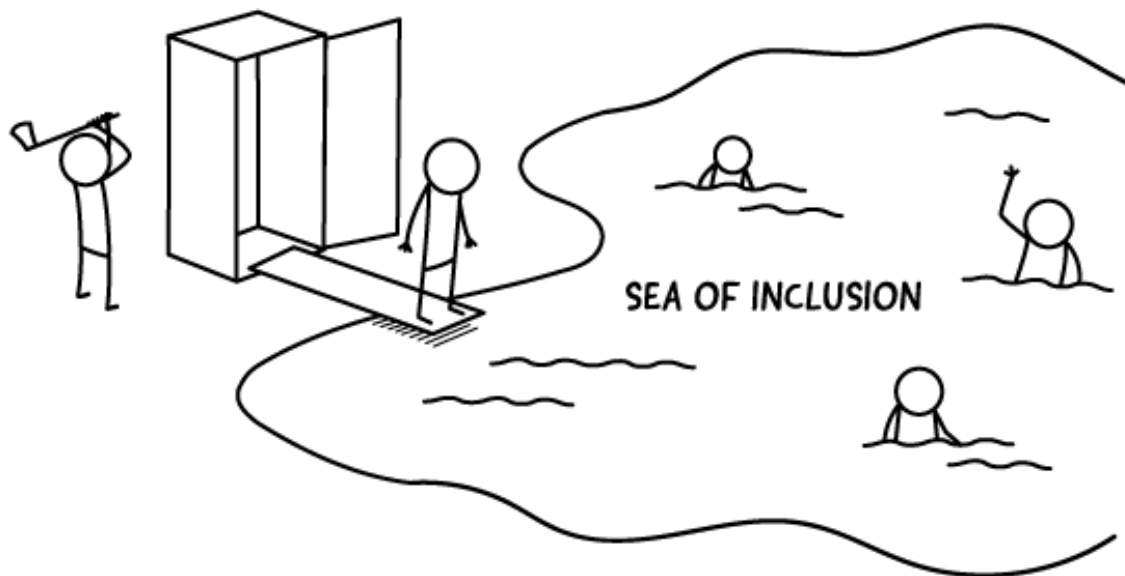
Figure 9: If inclusion is to 'help' the other come out of the closet, then norm critique is to tear down the normative foundation of that closet.

9.1.4 Concluding on article four

The fourth and final article addresses the second part of the research question concerning how a norm-critical conceptualisation of organisational diversity contributes to the alternative study and practice of organising diversity. It does so by extending the discussion in article three on researcher positionality (Cruz, 2016, 2017) and self-critique. Article four argues that in order to know alternatives to dominant organisational norms (i.e. alternative ways of organising diversity), one must practise more-than-paranoid critical inquiry. The article connects the critical performativity literature introduced in the second article with debates about alternative organisation(s) (Parker, 2018; Parker & Parker, 2017; Reedy et al., 2016; Reedy, 2014) to suggest reparative reading (Sedgwick, 2002) as an alternative way of seeking, finding and organising knowledge norm-critically. A cognitive/affective theoretical practice of wonder (MacLure, 2013 – see also Just et al., 2017; Ahmed, 2014; Steward, 2007) is developed to explore, empirically, *counter-normative* organisational spaces at a festival event.

The message of the article is that norm-critical research can be conducted by criticising and changing organisations whose practices the researcher disapproves of, but it is equally important to *affirm* and elevate the alternatives that the norm-critical researcher finds admirable – and to use said cases to think differently about and challenge dominant norms of organisation. As such, the fourth article traces back to points made in articles two and three about norm critique being affirmative (Juelskjær & Staunæs, 2016; Staunæs, 2016; Raffnsøe, 2017; Staunæs, 2018; Staunæs & Raffnsøe, 2019). Thus, norm critique does not stop with criticising *what is*; it also shows *what could be* by means of affirming *tendencies of difference*. However, due to the scope of the article, the relevance of the analytically emerging

alternatives to organising diversity is not discussed. I will continue discussing this after some general concluding remarks.

9.2 GENERAL CONCLUDING REMARKS

9.2.1 Norm critique – a minimal definition

I have defined *norm critique* as an analytical *orientation* toward social norms and how they organise diversity and our study of it. The conceptualisation of norm critique rests on a *performative ontology*, which is to say that organisational norms are performatively constituted and obtain a state of normality through their continuous repetition. Organisational diversity, then, can be defined as that which deviates from a dominant norm and, thus, comes to appear as different from the norm. That is, organisational diversity is performatively produced *in relation* to a given norm that does not include it. This is another way of saying that once constituted, an organisational norm constructs its 'other' as that which does not fit into the norm. As a consequence of ontological performativity – and relevant to the second half of the research question – norms can and do change over time and across organisational contexts. They are contingent, meaning they can be different as there is no inherent basis for established norms.

My definitions of norm critique and organisational diversity are minimal in the sense that the question of what form or shape norms and diversity have taken in a particular organisational context remains open to the empirical. Norm-critical research and practice may make strategic use of diversity categories, even binary thinking, for the purpose of analysis. But analysis does not begin with such distinctions. That would mean to lose out on a critical capacity for describing what

organisational norms are at play and how diversity is produced and organised in relation to said norms. In sum: while diversity may be a given – a condition of the establishment of norms taking place in organisation – the particularities of norms and diversity cannot be assumed. Ahmed (2014) summarises the risk of making clear distinctions as follows.

> When experiences (human or otherwise) are messy, making distinctions that are clear can mean losing our capacity for description. One problem with constantly refining our conceptual distinctions is that arguments can then end up being *about* those distinctions. I have never found intellectual conversations about definitions particularly inspiring in part as they often end up as self-referential, as being about the consistency or inconsistency of our own terms.
>
> (Ahmed, 2014: 210, italics in original)

I believe I meet Ahmed (2014) halfway with my definition, that does not demarcate diversity a priori but understands it in relational terms according to specific organisational norms. Relatedly, in shifting the focus from individuals to organisational norms, norm critique offers a more *intersectional* orientation to organisational diversity. For example, in article two, I showed how a norm-critical reflection exercise produced multiple categories of difference – and significance – among the participants. Another example is found in article four where the norm-critical potential in alternative organisation brought to the fore an unusual category of relevance to organisational diversity; that of voluntarism. Volunteering, as it turned out, allowed for the inclusion of a group of people with 'psychological

vulnerabilities'. The flexibility of that category permitted this particular group of volunteers to (re)negotiate the terms of their inclusion.

9.2.2 Intersectionality and transgression

Norm critique contributes to and extends the research agenda on intersectionality in terms of its ability to discuss intersecting diversity categories without reifying them (Villesèche, Muhr, & Sliwa, 2018; Dennissen et al., 2018; Acker, 2012). As a method for intervention, norm critique pushes the agenda for operationalising critique and theorisation (Holck et al., 2016) – a demand that is particularly marked in the critical performativity debates (Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2016, 2009), although with only a few published examples of researchers working to actively intervene in organisations (King, 2015). My emphasis on norms has allowed for not only the transgression of 'old' categories of difference but also the emergence of new or otherwise overlooked categories (e.g. volunteering) that may be more reflective of dynamics in a given organisational context (Rodriguez et al., 2016).

9.2.3 Embodied critique

The potential for norm critique to transgress the categorical thinking that diversity management especially has been criticised for applying stems from my conception of diversity in qualitative terms as *embodied* (Bell & King, 2010), which points to the material effects of diversity discourse. Diversity management is criticised for measuring diversity in terms of its difference to an organisational norm that becomes the universal, neutral and objective point of reference (Zanoni et al., 2010; Case et al., 2012). My norm-critical assertion has been that the norm, around which diversity is organised, becomes visible to bodies that are excluded by it. Whereas

bodies that inhabit the norm may experience it as immaterial and, therefore, remain largely unaware of it, bodies that are different to the norm will see that norm materialise in front of them as Ahmed's (2019) brick wall, mentioned in the introductory chapter. This is what I have meant when stating that norms are sensed – *felt* – through embodied apprehensions of deviating from them. Diversity work, therefore, is indisputably about diversity subjects who need to be heard if we are to become aware of organisational norms that needlessly exclude. However, diversity work is just as much about the bodies that reflect a given norm and, thereby, reproduce it performatively.

9.3 BACK TO THE FESTIVAL (AND ARTICLE FOUR)

My engagement with alternative (i.e. non-conventional) organisation(s) is a direct contribution to diversity studies, which as a field has been criticised for privileging workplace diversity over diversity in other types of organisation and organising phenomena (Özbilgin & Tatlil, 2011; Tomlinson & Schwabenland, 2010; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). In other words, since most diversity research has been conducted with managers and employers, the perspectives of other actors have remained underexplored. With that shortcoming in mind, I would like to pick up where the fourth article ended to draw conclusions specific to diversity studies based on the analytically emerging alternative organisational practices at Roskilde Festival.

Recall how Roskilde Festival donated money directly to the LGBT+ organisation behind Camp Unicorny for their work to ensure greater representation at the festival event. The donation is a way of acknowledging the diversity work done by diversity subjects. The money enables them to do diversity work in their own right and also to sustain that work beyond the festival. It is a requirement that recipients of

donations continue the supported activities beyond the festival event, but Roskilde Festival does not make any further demands, since this would place a disproportional burden on the volunteer forces in the receiving organisations. Instead, Roskilde Festival *trusts* that the beneficiaries know themselves how best to spend the money. Roskilde Festival, in other words, practises an anarchist organisational (and post-structural) aim of not assuming ability to represent the will or interests of others (May, 1989).

This way of seeding and setting free through monetary donations is an alternative to more mainstream practices of managing (understood as controlling and regulating) diversity (Christiansen & Just, 2012). Rather than managing a number of initiatives top-down *on behalf of* the diversity subjects that Roskilde Festival would like to support, the organisation seems to recognise that the intended beneficiaries know best what they need. This bottom-up approach to organisational diversity takes to task certain issues of *representationalism* in diversity work that otherwise become a hindrance to self-determination. One problem with representation is that those who embody diversity are included as *objects of knowledge* but excluded as *knowing subjects* (Oswick & Noon, 2014). Instead of trying to represent the LGBT+ community in Camp Unicorny, Roskilde Festival supports it through funding. The donation, therefore, becomes an alternative organisational practice with which to ensure both *redistribution* and *recognition* (Fraser, 1995; Young, 1997) given that funding is a way, if not *the* way, of valuing something in a capitalist market economy. In doing so, Roskilde Festival valorises the group.

In article four, I refrained from speculating on the transferability to other organisational contexts of the alternative to organising diversity seen in the context of Roskilde Festival. And I will refrain from doing so here, since that would be to evaluate the alternative against some ulterior standard based on its usefulness to the mainstream (Reedy, 2014). Indeed, to write of it as an alternative is, in some sense, to marginalise it. Yet, I cannot help wondering if conventional workplaces and corporate organisations that want to champion diversity could invite in organisations that represent the (groups of) people that are to be included through diversity work. That would require these organisations to think differently about their boundaries in terms of who is included as a member and who is not. The boundaries would cease to be static, fixed or clearly marked by the exterior walls of the organisations' domiciles. Instead, and more in line with a process view of organisation (Hernes, 2014), boundaries would become fluid, expanding and contracting as matters of inclusion and exclusion are negotiated *with* (not about) the beneficiaries intended. In my exploration of Roskilde Festival's efforts to prevent transgressive behaviour (see Christensen, forthcoming 2020), I have observed them acknowledging the limitations of their own knowledge in the area. To compensate, Roskilde Festival partners up with and invites in external organisations, thereby renegotiating who is knowledgeable in a particular area. In reworking the positions of known and knower, Roskilde Festival is also legitimising the body of knowledge that the partner organisations can bring to the table.

Now, I am *not* arguing that diversity subjects should shoulder the diversity work while those producing the diversity problem go free. As an early career researcher in the field of critical diversity studies and as someone marked by diversity discourse in different organisational contexts, including my current institution, I know all too well how easily diversity work gets placed in the hands of those of us

embodying diversity. If it is not handed to us directly, then this happens indirectly through expectations that we automatically have an interest in doing such work due to our personal investment (it is about 'us' and not 'them', which we, from a norm-critical vantage point, know to be a lie). And I know how such organisational practice becomes problematic in keeping diversity subjects busily occupied, taking time and energy away from other work – in my case the work of writing and publishing articles, which in the end is what sustains my ability to continue doing diversity work.

I find the authorship of Ahmed (2012, 2017, 2019) to be persuasive in showing this outcome of organisations frequently putting diversity work in the hands of diversity subjects. Her critique, however, is tied to the *nonperformative* effects of diversity. Nonperformativity, according to Ahmed (2019: 153), is when naming something (diversity) does not bring about that something or when something is named for the purpose of not bringing it about, which arguably would be the case if diversity work is not supported institutionally in the form of resources broadly understood. I, however, find it equally problematic when the responsibility for diversity is placed solely in the hands of a manager who gets to represent the will, needs and motivations of diversity subjects. Diversity work is not the prerogative of managers; it is something that every-body does when coming together to organise stuff, albeit with the burden of labour unevenly distributed depending on how one relates to the organisational norm.

9.4 FURTHER PERSPECTIVES

In the introduction, I brought up the idea that while a destination may present itself as such – that is, as an ending, the conclusion to a journey – I have learned over the

past three years that destinations hardly ever conclude journeys. Of course a destination may say something about the roads taken to arrive at a particular place and time, but it says just as much about the trajectories not taken or the ones that could have been taken – as I hope I have made clear in sharing how my original proposal differed from what the project became. Moreover, arriving at a given destination doesn't only tell us something about where we came from; it also lays out the possible roads ahead. In other words, the destination is, at once, a new point of departure. I will use these final pages to reflect on possible directions that I (and others) might take with the publication of this dissertation.

9.4.1 GenderLAB – combining norm critique and design thinking

A road already taken, that I will continue to walk down to see where it leads me, involves GenderLAB – a collaborative project between the Copenhagen Business School Diversity and Difference Platform (for which I am Theme Lead for Gender and Sexuality) and Kvinfo (a Danish knowledge centre for gender, equality and diversity). GenderLAB is, as the name suggests, a learning laboratory where participants can have structured conversations on ambitions, scale and impact of ideas and possible solutions to a diversity problem. As such, GenderLAB is an extension of Staunæs and Kofoed's (2015) notion of the 'pop-up laboratory'. Lab – short for laboratory – means 'a place to work' that is designed for 'testing assumptions on a particular research subject on the spot' (Stauns & Kofoed, 2015: 45.). What I find particularly interesting about GenderLAB, and what aligns it perfectly with the continuation of my PhD project, is how the lab combines norm critique and design thinking.

In the second article, I stressed how norm-critical methods may produce *ephemeral* experiences of intersectionality; that is, momentary realisations of how one and others relate to specific organisational norms. I emphasise ephemerality as I consider these experiences to be bound to the norm-critical workshops that facilitated them. To say that they are ephemeral is a matter of caution, as I do not know whether participants' intersectional experiences have had an effect over time and outside the facilitated space. GenderLAB promises to overcome that state of ephemerality by producing solutions to self-identified diversity problems, that participants can go on to implement in their own organisations. They aim to do this by integrating action-oriented and productive elements from design thinking with norm-critical insights and exercises that allow for critical reflexivity to mitigate bias in the design process.

GenderLAB's combination of norm critique and design thinking addresses a weakness with norm critique that I discussed in article three. Whereas norm critique is process oriented, design thinking tends to be result oriented. Design thinking is about quantity over quality (at least in its initial phases), and the idea is to get the largest output as fast as possible. It goes without saying that design thinking for that reason is a quick activity that leaves little to no time for critical reflection. In spite of its name, design thinking emphasises *doing* over *thinking*. As a cognitive process, it functions in accordance with Kahneman's (2011) notion of System 1, which is the category he uses for thinking on autopilot. System 1 operates automatically and quickly.

> System 1 provides the impressions that often turn into your beliefs, and is the source of the impulses that often become your choices and your actions. It

offers a tacit interpretation of what happens to you and around you, linking the present with the recent past and with expectations about the near future. It contains the model of the world that instantly evaluates events as normal or surprising. It is the source of your rapid and often precise intuitive judgment. And it does most of this without your conscious awareness of its activities.

(Kahneman, 2011: 58)

However, as Kahneman mentions, System 1 is also the origin of many of the systematic errors in our intuitions: 'The main function of System 1 is to maintain and update a model of your personal world, which represents what is *normal* in it' (Kahneman, 2011: 71, my emphasis). A potential risk with design thinking, therefore, is that participants remain in this state, only activating System 1. On its own, design thinking potentially becomes a form of functional stupidity (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016, 2012) where the solutions produced originate from each participant's own normative position. Their norms dictate not only what appears as a problem, but also how that problem came about and, consequently, what solutions may seem plausible.

In contrast to design thinking, norm critique on its own may give rise to dysfunctional reflexivity (the opposite of functional stupidity). Norm critique activates Kahneman's (2011: 21) System 2, which 'allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it' and is often 'associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice and concentration'. In a state of reflexivity – that is, a state of thinking that operationalises System 2 with an increased level of awareness about the complex and multifaceted ways in which diversity issues intersect – participants can become overwhelmed by complexity and be paralysed, unable to

act. Thus, to combine the norm-critical method with a design thinking process is to keep their disadvantages at bay.

Another reason to combine them is based on the common understanding in design thinking and norm critique of certain problems as wicked or higher level. The basic assertation is that 'every formulation of a *wicked problem* corresponds to the formulation of a solution' (Buchanan, 1992: 16, italics in original). To put it another way, the formulation of a problem pre-empts the available solutions. There is no absolute solution to a wicked problem. If the problem is redefined from a different perspective, say at a structural rather than an individual level, what previously appeared as an obvious solution may no longer be so relevant. This means that a solution is only a solution to 'its' problem. Let me give an example from an article of mine (Christensen & Muhr 2019) that makes use of the same data as article one. If the under-representation of women in management is problematised as a matter of them somehow not being able to do management (a biological essentialist perspective), then a possible solution is to 'fix' women to help them develop management potential. Here, women's bodies become the sites for intervention. However, if the problem is stated as a matter of discriminatory recruitment practices that, generally speaking, favour men over women due to the misalignment between stereotypical views of women as a group and normalised, masculine ideals of management (and leadership), it is more likely that such excluding organisational norms (not women) will become the site for intervention. The foremost task of the norm-critical reflection exercises used by GenderLAB, therefore, is to avoid the

individualisation of problems and to redirect attention to organisational norms instead.[24]

9.4.2 Transgressive behaviour

I have, together with Kvinfo, proposed a lab format tailored to the needs and wishes of Roskilde Festival for the purpose of generating ideas about how to create more diverse and inclusive volunteer communities. That proposal would allow me to continue refining my conceptualisation of norm critique as well as keep working with Roskilde Festival as a case organisation. As a sociological garden, the festival event is also an ideal site to study the (re)production of norms from a process view of organisation (Hernes, 2014); that is, how norms, from a performative ontology, create a sense of continuity between occurrences of the regenerative festival event (Birnholtz, Cohen, & Hoch, 2007). Phrasing that question differently, we may ask how certain actions or organising activities produce the organisation of particular norms. As the organisation takes place around specific norms, these become embedded in the organisation of the festival space. But to obtain a relative stability, the norms must be performed repeatedly. A related follow-up question, therefore, concerns how to introduce difference to the performative doings of said norms for the purpose of making room for diversity.

Transgressive behaviour at Roskilde Festival events, as mentioned in article four, also makes for an interesting phenomenon from a norm-critical perspective. While

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[24] Please see the GenderLAB report:

https://www.cbs.dk/files/cbs.dk/genderlab_dissemination_report_1.pdf.

it is intuitive that transgressive behaviour can be formed and maintained as a cultural norm in more permanent social contexts, it is more of a puzzle how such behaviour is perpetuated from one instance of the festival event to another; that is, after longer periods of interruption, given that no two festival events are attended by the exact same participants year after year. By definition, we may say that a given behaviour is transgressive when it transgresses the personal boundaries of others who, then, experience that particular behaviour as transgressive. In chapter three, I listed how I, together with colleagues, have already conducted a number of interviews (61 to be exact) with different guests at Roskilde Festival to explore their attitudes towards and experiences of transgressive behaviour. Among the preliminary insights is that personal boundaries may exist only as vague notions or normative ideas of right and wrong which are mutable and, therefore, subject to change across different organisational contexts. An act deemed transgressive at work may not be viewed in this way at a concert and vice versa. While it is too early to conclude that certain behavioural norms are suspended at Roskilde Festival, it seems fair to suggest that they are bent and put to the test in the liberated atmosphere of festival.[25]

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[25] Please follow this link and refer to pp. 14–15 for reporting (in Danish) on preliminary insights: https://www.roskilde-festival.dk/media/2926/rf_orangetogether_rapport_2019_web.pdf.

Afterword

Struggle. The word with which I began the introduction to this dissertation – and with which I begin this afterword. For I am still struggling. I struggle to write the final word on a journey that continues. So instead of a final word, let me offer one final illustration. I have made use of drawings throughout the dissertation for various reasons, one being to make my abstract thinking more concrete. At the same time, the drawings, I hope, communicate in excess of my writing. The drawings take over when language falls short, so to speak. And they are open to interpretation, which allows for thinking about the concept of norm critique differently. That is, the illustrations reduce the level of abstraction without necessarily reducing complexity, as they can communicate a number of insights depending on the inventiveness of the reader. The illustration below takes us on a voyage to infinite space and enables some closing thoughts on organisational norms.
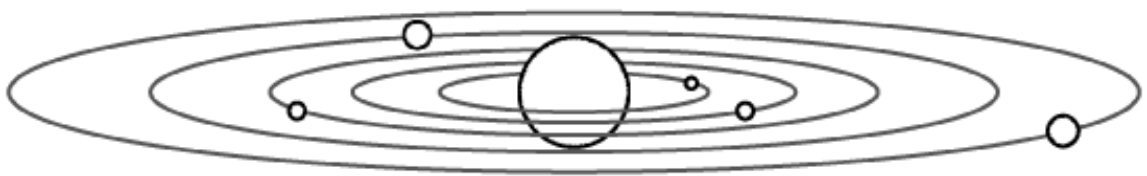
Figure 10: The univers(ality) of organisational norms.

The illustration is of a solar system: a gravitationally bound system of a star, around which other objects orbit. These other objects are understood in relation to the star; for example, based on their proximity to it. The same is true of organisational norms, which establish a gravitational centre against which diversity subjects are measured. Just as with the sun in our solar system, you can get too close to a norm, in which

case you are absorbed by it – you conform, assimilate and become the same as the norm. But you can also get too far away. In that case, you end up marginalised in the periphery, where you become alienated and unknown to the system used as the point of reference. You belong, but not quite. In our solar system, Earth happens to be in what scientists call the habitable zone, a narrow margin that exists around the sun and a certain distance from it, where life as we know it can be sustained. Likewise, norms leave little room for life as it is lived to be recognised as viable. At the same time, norms can have a magnitude that makes it impossible for any-body to inhabit them fully. However, unlike our solar system, organisational norms are not governed by natural laws of physics. Organisational norms are naturalised over time, meaning that they come to appear as natural or normal but are, in fact, merely a temporary suspension of contingency. We may, as subjects, be conditioned by social and organisational norms, but they do not determine us. Let us approach them with the same curiosity we exhibit when exploring the universe and discovering other worlds.

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Appendix: Co-author statement

Co-author statement

Title of paper	Desired diversity and symptomatic anxiety: theorising failed diversity as Lacanian lack
Journal and date (if published)	*Culture and Organization*, 24(2): 114-133. DOI: 10.1080/14759551.2017.1407764

1. Formulation/identification of the scientific problem to be investigated and its operationalization into an appropriate set of research questions to be answered through empirical research and/or conceptual development
Description of contribution: 50/50.
2. Planning of the research, including selection of methods and method development
Description of contribution: 50/50.
3. Involvement in data collection and data analysis
Description of contribution: Data collection: 100% Sara Louise Muhr Data Analysis: 100% Jannick Friis Christensen
4. Presentation, interpretation and discussion of the analysis in the form of an article or manuscript
Description of contribution: 50/50.

1. Co-author (PhD student)	Jannick Friis Christensen

I hereby declare that the above information is correct

_____ 20/11-2019 _ _____
Date   Signature

2. Co-author	Sara Louise Muhr

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