“At Tryg there is room for everyone. Nevertheless, you’ve got to be something special.”¹ Thus reads the caption of a poster designed to attract trainees with an ethnic minority background to the Danish insurance company Tryg.² Through the paradoxical combination of the two clauses, the text re-evaluates the concept of diversity. Not only is there room for everyone in the sense of a mere tolerance for and inclusion of differences, which is expressed in the first sentence. Rather, unique characteristics are, as the second phrase stipulates, actually expected of the prospective employee, and diversity becomes an actively sought after quality. At Tryg, it is implied, there is no room for those, who are merely like everyone else, and the unfortunate Average Joe need not apply. A reversal of the usual ‘rules of discrimination’ has been performed. But what does being special mean to the company and the prospective employee? And which notions of collective and individual identity underlie the positive appraisal of difference?

These questions are not only central to the study of Tryg’s recruitment strategy and its general diversity policy; they also form the crux of the conceptualisation of diversity management as such. In the following, I shall focus on the theoretical tensions that are inherent to diversity management. These tensions may be presented as a list of binary oppositions: similarity-difference, conformity-creativity, group-individual. I shall suggest that the oppositions arise in and are perceived as problematic to mainstream perspectives of diversity management, because of an implicit reliance on essentialist notions of organisational culture. Following the critique of the theoretical basis of diversity management, I shall present an alternative theory,

¹ My translation of: “Hos Tryg er der plads til alle. Men du skal alligevel være noget særligt.”
² Tryg is the Danish part of TrygVesta, the second largest Nordic insurance company. ‘Tryg’ usually translates as ‘safe’ or ‘secure,’ but the company prefers the less common, but equally valid ‘peace of mind.’ For example, this translation is found in the English version of the company’s vision statement: “we want to be perceived as the leading peace of mind supplier of the Nordic region…” (http://www.trygvesta.com/netinsurance01/notes.do?uniklink=TVGVision).
which does not seek to resolve the tensions of diversity, but reframes them as the very strength of the approach.

The theoretical alternative is based on Judith Butler’s poststructuralist perspective, and I shall present it under the label of performative diversity. The basic assumption of this perspective is that identities are performed. Neither individual nor collective identities are stable entities that pertain to the person or the group; rather, identities are continuously (re-)created in and through (inter-)action. Thus, an organisation cannot become diverse simply by hiring a number of people with different identities. If the organisation does not actively espouse social practices that encourage the expression of differences between its members, the result of socialisation into the organisation will be suppression rather than release of the potential of diversity.

Performative diversity, then, conceives of diversity as a dynamic and volatile set of practices, which must be constantly re-enacted, rather than a condition that can be established once and for all. However, the equation of diversity with its performance does not mean that structures, frameworks, and other stable or stabilising features of the organisation become unimportant. The specific performances that constitute diversity are enabled and constrained by the organisational context, and the organisation’s conceptualisation of diversity is a central contextual aspect. The conceptualisation, which is dominant within the organisation and guides its policies and initiatives, is particularly pertinent, because it provides the boundaries of intelligibility within which diversity may be meaningfully performed in the particular organisational setting. Hence, discourses on and performances of diversity are mutually constitutive; the ways in which the organisation speaks about diversity influences the enactment of diversity in the organisational setting and vice versa.

On the basis of the theoretical discussion of performative diversity and its relationship with organisational discourse the second part of the paper focuses on the analysis of how discursive features may condition the performance of diversity in the case of Tryg. The aim of this analysis is to uncover the notion of diversity that underlies the company’s policies and practices, and to discuss how that notion may enable and delimit the performance of diverse identities within the company. Furthermore, the analysis is meant to illustrate the explanatory potential of the
performative perspective, and, finally, it will point to the practical implications of performative diversity.

Having culture – implicit assumptions of mainstream diversity management

Diversity management has been criticised for being theoretically underdeveloped and hampered by conceptual inconsistencies (Nkomo & Cox, 1996). As a result of these insufficiencies, the mainstream literature on diversity management is more characterised by implicit assumptions than by explicit theoretical statements (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004: 56). It is apparent that different advocates of diversity management hold different basic assumptions, but it is not always clear what these assumptions are, and it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the various versions of diversity management have any common ground. The lack of clarity as to how core elements such as organisational culture and individual identity are conceived within diversity management is particularly problematic. Hence, a discussion of diversity management would profit from an investigation of the assumptions that may not be stated, but are nevertheless inherent to the approach. In the field of organisational culture there exist a number of different perspectives, which are not only well-developed independently, but have also been compared and contrasted to each other, and the investigation of the implicit assumptions of diversity management may, therefore, begin by relating it to organisational culture.

Since we are dealing with an approach that professes to manage diversity, it seems right to begin the discussion with the managerial perspectives on organisational culture. According to Joanne Martin such managerial perspectives are usually integrationist. That is, managers imagine culture as a monolith; they view organisations as entities with one overarching and coherent culture, and they perceive individual members as pertaining to and replicating the culture as a whole (Martin, 1992: 52). From this perspective it becomes the task of the manager to create and disseminate the culture in such a way that consensus and consistency is, indeed, achieved and maintained. As Edgar Schein puts it: “...one could argue that the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage cultures and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture” (Schein, 1992: 5).

When compared to these assumptions, diversity management may be perceived as a break with typical managerial approaches to culture, since diversity
management neither perceives the organisation as one cultural whole, nor believes that the leader should attempt to create cultural unity. On the contrary, diversity management recognises and cherishes the cultural differences of the members of the organisation and believes the manager should create an environment in which differences may not only be preserved, but also employed constructively to the benefit of the organisation as well as its members (Cox & Beale, 1997: 2). Thus, diversity management differs from other managerial perspectives on organisational culture in that it upholds an ideal of plurality rather than of unity. However, it remains attached to the basic ideas that culture can and must be managed and that leaders play a crucial role in the (re-)production of organisational culture(s) (Hofstede, 1989: 392). In this sense diversity management does not depart from mainstream management perceptions of culture.

George Cheney et al. have characterised the belief that cultural features can be put to use and, if needs be, changed by management as ‘functionalist.’ They explain that the functionalist approach presupposes that culture is distinguishable from other elements of the organisation, since the culture cannot be used and change, if it is not somehow separable from other organisational features. In this sense, culture comes to be perceived as something organisations have (Cheney et al., 2004: 87). This is not to say that the managerial perspective cannot conceive of culture as deeply rooted and difficult to change. Nor does it imply that proponents of diversity management cannot recognise that the culture of an organisation interrelates with the group-affiliations and individual identities of its member members, wherefore the organisational culture may be highly diversified (Cox, 1991: 39). Ultimately, however, diversity management – and other managerial perspectives on culture – relies on the functionalist notion of culture as a tool that can be operationalised and manipulated.

The functionalist perception of culture as something organisations and individuals have is based upon two premises: culture as object and culture as essence. These two notions are clearly related, but their relationship is also an uneasy one, which makes the perspective vulnerable to criticism. The reliance on the two notions and the conceptual problems, which their interrelationship incurs, are particularly apparent in Geert Hofstede’s influential definition of culture as ‘software of the mind’ (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005: 3). The analogy of the computer program situates culture as both an object, which is separate from the entity in which it is
installed, and an essence, an internally coherent and stable state of being. Although Hofstede notes that the analogy should not be taken too literally, the analogical reasoning does imply that the cultural software is stable once it is installed, and that cultural change amounts to the replacement of one type of software with another. Moreover, it suggests that individuals are not in a position to perform the (re-)installation of culture. Rather, cultural change becomes the privilege of a master programmer – the leader of the organisation, one presumes. Viewed thus, the ideas of culture as object and essence seemingly go well together, and the managerial appeal of the combined position is clear.

Nevertheless, explanatory difficulties arise as to how managers become able to move from the position of a passive subject in which the mental software of culture is installed to the position of cultural programmer. Proponents of Hofstede’s perspective will probably object that this criticism is due to the overly literal reading of the analogy, which Hofstede warns against, and surely the assurances that people are not completely predetermined by culture (Hofstede & Hofstede, 2005: 3) and that various cultural programmes may be operational at once (Hofstede, 1989: 391), are important caveats. However, if one does not interpret the functionalist notion of culture – be it expressed as software of the mind or in other terms – as implying that the imprinting of culture on individuals is somehow performed from without, the definition of culture as both object and essence becomes incongruous. How can an object become an essence if it is not installed?

The move away from a simplistic reading of the object-essence relationship not only reveals the tensions of that relationship, but also shows that reliance on it leads to an understanding of culture, which is inherently skewed. The notion of culture as object and essence privileges stability over change and groups over individuals. This is an understanding that allows a perception of culture as a tool, but also leaves the question of how leaders may use that tool unanswered. More importantly, however, it is an understanding that neither accounts for the cultural changes that actually occur, nor for the ways in which individuals are not only influenced by but also influence the groups to which they belong. In sum, the functionalist perspective does not explain the dynamics through which individual identities are constituted through cultural membership at the same time as individuals contribute to the constitution of culture.
Since diversity management deals with the many different cultures that employees may bring into the organisation, the assumption of having culture may be said to have shifted from the level of the organisation to that of the individual. This does not mean, however, that more control over the process of cultural programming is ascribed to the individual; instead, the programming power is attributed to social and demographic rather than organisational factors. Hofstede explains this shift from the organisational to the national level through a division between values and practices. Values, he says, are located at the deepest cultural level, and they are defined by the individual's national, not organisational, affiliations, since they “...are programmed into us first, that is, right from the day we are born” (Hofstede, 1989: 391). Thus, national values are said to be deeply rooted in the individual and very difficult to change. Practices, on the contrary, are deemed to be more superficial, and organisational cultures are primarily defined in terms of such practices, which the individual may learn and unlearn as he or she enters and leaves various organisations in the course of the working life (Hofstede, 1989: 391-392).

Diversity management is concerned with the cultures that individuals bring with them into the organisation, and although focus is not exclusively on national cultures, there is a tendency to stress deep-seated values more than changeable practices. Thus, organisational diversity is usually defined in terms of “the mix of people of different socially relevant group identities working or living together in a defined social system” (Cox & Beale, 1997: 13). Through this definition diversity management comes to view the individual according to his or her ethnicity, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, and physical/psychological abilities – to name but the criteria that are usually highlighted when commercial organisations as well as political institutions take diversity initiatives. These are all characteristics, which the individual has prior to his or her entry into the organisation, wherefore the managerial task can be viewed as upholding differences instead of creating commonalities. Diversity management, when proceeding from this definition of diversity, is firstly a question of recruitment, of allowing people with diverse traits to enter the organisation, and secondly an issue of protection, of securing that diversity is cherished and thus maintained once it has entered the organisation (Winterle, 1992: 11).

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3 See for instance the definitions provided by the European Union in relation to the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/eyeq/index.cfm).
The first two priorities of diversity management – recruiting for and keeping up diversity – shift attention away from the creative role, which other managerial perspectives on culture ascribe to the leader. However, most proponents of diversity management see recruitment and protection as necessary but not sufficient initiatives. Diversity management, all but the earliest and most basic contributions to the field assert, is also about cultural change (Kossek & Lobel, 1996: 5). Thus, diversity management preserves a role for the leader as the maker of culture, since the leader must ensure that the organisation has a culture, which allows for the members of the organisation to have different cultures. That is, diversity managers should aim at creating an organisational culture of inclusion; “a culture that is build on clarified normative grounds and honors the differences as well as the similarities of the individual self and others” (Pless & Maak, 2004: 130).

I believe the third aim of diversity management, the creation of an organisational culture that facilitates diversity, to be particularly important. Only within such a cultural framework does diversity become a resource, which may be activated to the benefit of both the organisation and its members, instead of just a passive factor that must be taken into account, but has no value in and of itself. However, I do not believe that this goal is served by the conceptualisation of culture as something organisations and individuals have, which is arguably the implicit basis of much of the present work on diversity management. Therefore, I will now turn to an alternative theory of culture, which may provide the explanatory basis for a critique of existing conceptualisations and the foundation for a stronger notion of diversity. Although the introduction of this alternative theory represents a break with traditional managerial perspectives, I will argue that diversity management may nevertheless benefit from the re-conceptualisation of diversity.

**Performative diversity – a poststructuralist alternative**

Cheney and his co-authors present two alternatives to the functionalist view of culture as something organisations and individuals have: a symbolist perspective, which begins from the basic presupposition that organisations *are* culture, and a third perspective, which states that organisations *do* culture (Cheney et al., 2004: 88-94). Joanne Martin offers a slightly different categorisation of the various approaches to culture. What Cheney et al. term functionalism, Martin and her colleagues call the integrationist perspective, and the two alternatives to integration are labelled the
differentiation and the fragmentation perspectives (Meyerson & Martin, 1987). While Cheney et al. present both the differentiation and the fragmentation perspectives as examples of the approach they term symbolist (Cheney et al., 2004: 92), I deem that the fragmentation perspective belongs to the group of approaches, which sees culture as something organisations do. This re-organisation of the categories does not, however, mean that the differentiation and the symbolist perspectives are identical with each other. Symbolism is a broad approach, whereas differentiation points to a more particular view in which organisational culture is studied critically in order to disclose power relations between various sub-cultures of the organisation (Martin, 1992: 83).

Differentiation, then, represents a subcategory of the broad group of symbolist approaches that sees culture as that which organisation are, but fragmentation, I believe, coincides completely with the understanding of culture as that which organisations do. Cheney et al. do not provide a label for the perspective that sees culture as organisational doing, and I propose that the perspective should be termed poststructuralist, since the poststructuralist account of culture, as I shall develop it below, begins from the very idea that both organisational cultures and individual identities are emergent processes rather than stable entities (Jones & Stablein, 2006: 150). Moreover, the term poststructuralist is in keeping with Martin’s presentation of the fragmentation perspective to which she assigns the poststructural analytical mode of deconstruction (Martin, 1992: 147). These analytical implications of the poststructuralist stance will be taken up at a later stage. Before turning to questions of analytical strategy, however, I shall present the poststructuralist alternative to functionalism and make a brief comparison of the poststructuralist and symbolist approaches with a special eye to the critical approach, which Martin calls differentiation. I will conclude the theoretical discussion with a presentation of the image that emerges when diversity management is viewed through the poststructural lens.

In direct opposition to structuralist assumptions about the stability of the underlying rules of social systems – assumptions, which are also part and parcel of the functionalist approach (Giddens, 1984: 1) – poststructuralism begins from the general idea that signification is a never-ending process (Best & Kellner, 1991: 20). Thus, poststructuralists believe that all areas of human life are subject to the

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4 Just as the labels of functionalism and integrationism are completely overlapping and contain the group of approaches, which view culture as something organisations have.
condition of difference; that is, to the certitude of uncertainty and the constancy of change.\textsuperscript{5} In the context of organisation studies the presupposition of indeterminate difference leads to the idea that organisational cultures are always emergent from the interaction that goes on in particular social settings (Parker, 2000: 82). Furthermore, this emergence not only takes place at the level of the organisation, but also involves the identities of each of the organisation’s members, since collective and individual identities interpenetrate each other (Sampson, 1989: 3-4). This means that individuals have the potential of both re-enforcing and altering groups, just as individual identities are both changed and preserved by society at large as well as the more specific groups to which the individual is a member. Permanence and change are as intertwined as are individuals and collectives, and the adequate theorisation of these complex interrelationships must both account for the role people play in the making and breaking of social settings and show how people are always already defined by the contexts in which they find themselves (Biesecker, 1997: 9).

Judith Butler’s theory of performativity offers such a two-pronged explanation. Butler builds her concept of performativity on the basis of Derrida’s critique of the notion of the performative in speech act theory. The performative, Derrida says, is not an act in and of itself, but only functions as a repetition:

\textit{Could a performative succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance, or in other words, if the formula I pronounce in order to open a meeting, launch a ship or a marriage were not identifiable as conforming with an iterable model, if it were not then identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’? (Derrida, 1988: 18).}

Nevertheless, the very conformity of the performative also makes room for alternative interpretations and new meanings; it is precisely because the performative is at once the same as and different from that which it iterates that it takes on agential characteristics (Derrida, 1986: 7-8). Butler generalises this idea of the performative as a repetition with a difference from the level of utterances to that of practices, arguing that all social settings are defined by conventionalised patterns that at once enable and delimit social acts – be they physical or verbal – and their interpretation (Butler, 1997: 25). Furthermore, Butler shifts the emphasis from specific acts and

\textsuperscript{5} Jacques Derrida has coined the term ‘différance’ to indicate what is at stake here – a difference between the signifier and the signified that is the precondition of all signification, an act of differing, of creating different significances with the same signifiers, and a process of deferral that hinders the establishment of stable significance (Culler, 1983: 97). Although the concept of différance presents important theoretical nuances, the simpler notion of difference in the everyday sense of the word is quite adequate for the present introductory purposes.
utterances to the potential for action that is embedded in social contexts and discursive frameworks; the notion of performativity encapsulates the agential potential of social interaction rather than the actual performances of the interacting individuals (Allen, 1998: 463-464).

The concept of performativity, then, aims at explaining how processes of individual identity formation are also processes of social reproduction through an emphasis on the entwinement of conformity and creativity that constitutes social and communicative action (Butler, 2003, p. 278). Here, it is evident that identity and agency are closely related; individuals become, who they are, by doing, what they do, and groups are at once defined by and defining of the individual members’ (inter-)actions (Jones & Stablein, 2006: 150). Performativity is not only the agential potential of a subject, it is also an effect of the ways in which individuals are called into being – or interpellated, as Althusser would have said – in particular social settings. When an individual recognises him- or herself as the subject, which is being addressed in an utterance, “the act of recognition becomes an act of constitution: the address animates the subject into existence” (Butler, 1997: 25). Although it is important to keep the agential potential, which is inherent in the concept of performativity in mind, it is equally imperative to study how identities are performed not by individual speaking subjects but by texts in contexts. The first question to be answered is, which identity positions are offered in a given text, and only on that basis may one discuss the various ways in which individuals may pick up on the offer and enact their identities.

The performative perspective with its emphasis on the dynamic interdependence of individual subjects and social settings clearly provides a theoretical basis for diversity management that is very different from the foundational assumptions of the functionalist position. However, the consequences of taking a performative stance on diversity may not be immediately clear, and a comparison between the critical and poststructuralist alternatives to mainstream diversity management may serve to clarify what the practice of performative diversity would actually look like. Moreover, the discussion of similarities and differences between the critical and the performative perspectives may provide support for the claim that not only is an alternative to functionalist diversity management needed, but poststructuralism offers the strongest theoretical background for the establishment of this alternative. Hence, a comparative clarification of performative diversity will round
off the theoretical discussion and clear the way for the presentation of performativity as a mode of analysis.

As a subcategory of the symbolist approach, which identifies organisations with their cultures, the critical approach highlights power relations between the various subcultures that are present within the organisation. Thus, critical studies of diversity management will focus on the exclusion and repression of various groups from/in the organisation (Jones & Stablein, 2006: 2006). Moreover, a critical analysis will emphasise the ways in which diversity management may serve to reproduce – even enhance – existing power relations rather than redefine or dissolve them (Zanoni & Janssens, 2003: 58). Analytically, the critical perspective is bent on exposing the effects that existing frameworks has on individuals, and in practical terms critical diversity management should be about providing new frames that are truly inclusive and empowering. However, critical management studies are more concerned with exposing than with solving problems. This may in part be explained as a defining feature of the critical stance, but it may also have to do with the conceptualisations of identity and culture, which are inherent to the critical perspective. Although the symbolist perspective so to speak moves organisations and cultures closer together than the functionalist perspective does, the view that organisations are culture retains some of the features that hamper the functionalist take on diversity management. Critical conceptualisations of diversity partake in the mainstream understanding that people bring diversity into organisations. Although the critical understanding of how demographic features and social factors may coalesce to form organisational subcultures is more subtle than the functionalist account, it is still inadequate in terms of explaining the dynamics of identity formation and cultural (re-)production within the organisation. When organisations are seen as being cultures and people as being their identities, diversity practices become about letting people remain, who they are, once they have entered the organisation, and accounts of as well as suggestions for the interaction between organisation and individual is still lacking.

Performative diversity, on the contrary, takes its starting point in the poststructuralist idea that identities and cultures are constantly emergent, and diversity arises from the tension between the repetitive and creative elements of social interaction that is constitutive of the organisation and its members per se. Hence an organisation cannot be or become diverse; it must constantly do diversity,
and although the inclusion of people with different potentials is still a prerequisite for diversity management, the actual focus is shifted from inclusion and maintenance of differences to the ways in which differences are articulated and performed. That is, the performative perspective begins from the notion that an organisational setting could never ‘let people be’; rather, identities always arise from their enactment within organisational and other social settings, and the task of diversity management is to establish boundaries of intelligibility and patterns of enactment that are so broad and varied as possible. Only when diversity is seen as a precarious condition that must be constantly (re-)enacted, does difference become a constitutive organisational feature. Diversity management cannot just protect differences, but must actively promote them; it must move beyond the aim of creating an organisational culture of inclusion and instead promote a culture of diversity, which truly breaks with the ideal of a unitary and stable organisational culture and sees pluralism and instability as not only unavoidable, but also valuable constitutive features. This, then, is the radical consequence of performative diversity: if individuals are to be able to perform in diverse ways within the organisation the theoretical notions and practical norms of an overarching and coherent organisational culture as well as of various subcultures that may be at odds with one another, but are internally consistent, must be abandoned for an idea and ideal of an organisation, which is multitudinous at both the cultural and the individual level.

**Discourses that matter – a strategy for textual analysis**

As suggested above the theory of performativity may inform practices of diversity management, and I shall return to this issue in the final section of this paper. However, one of the premises of the performative approach is that practices are always tied to their contextualised enactments, wherefore evaluations and suggestions must be preceded by careful analyses of existing performances. Thus, we must move from the level of general theory to that of specific analysis, and in the following I shall seek to illustrate the potential of the performative approach through an analysis of the conditions for performing diversity that are offered to current and prospective employees at the insurance company Tryg. In this section I present the analytical strategy that is in line with the performative perspective. Then I will introduce Tryg and its diversity policy, and finally I turn to a close reading of a particular instance of the company’s textual performance of diversity.
Since Judith Butler’s theory of performativity takes its starting point from the linguistic notion of the performative, it is not as directed towards physical action as the label might suggest. In fact, Butler emphasises the discursive constitution of subject positions and has been criticised for not paying sufficient attention to materiality (Ellehave, 2005: 33). While it must be recognised that bodies and their interactions with material as well as discursive frames do matter, the possible effects of texts and discourses on subject positions must not be neglected. Thus, studies in the performative mode should aim at explaining the interdependence of discursive and social practices, but it remains possible and valid to focus the analysis at either the textual or the material end of the spectrum. The present study begins from the textual end and aims at understanding the discursive rules that underlie particular rhetorical choices. That is, the study aims at showing what the utterance repeats and explaining how the repetition confirms and/or confounds that which is repeated.

The analytical focus on the particular expression of underlying rules is inspired by Joanne Martin’s analysis of a statement by a CEO on his company’s concern for the mothers among its employees (Martin, 1990). Martin’s study confirms that deconstructive analyses of specific texts – and even fragments of text – are relevant to organisation studies, and I follow this lead in opting for an analytical strategy of close reading. The analytical strategy is also informed by Patrizia Zanoni and Maddy Janssens’ work with a combination of critical discourse analysis and rhetoric (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Zanoni and Janssens illustrate how discourse analytical and rhetorical tools may be applied to the study of diversity management, and although I distinguish between the poststructuralist and the critical approach, their methodological points are pertinent to the present study. I am particularly interested in the ways in which rhetoric may be applied within the poststructuralist perspective, wherefore I will not tie the rhetorical analysis to critical discourse analysis. However, discourse remains central to the study, since the poststructuralist perspective implies that rhetorical utterances are the creative iterations of discursive rules, and the analysis seeks to explain the interaction of the two.

As mentioned above, Butler places particular emphasis on interpellation – the ways in which subjects are called into being by textual address. This emphasis on the textual constitution of audiences is well-known to rhetoricians. In the words of Maurice Charland, who has developed a theory of constitutive rhetoric that seeks to explain how social groups are established rhetorically, “…we cannot accept the
‘givenness’ of ‘audience,’ ‘person,’ or ‘subject,’ but must consider their textuality, their very constitution in rhetoric as a structured articulation of signs” (Charland, 1994: 216). Along the same lines, Edwin Black has suggested that we focus on the second persona, the audience as portrayed in the text, since “actual auditors look to the discourse they are attending for cues that tell them how they are to view the world, even beyond the expressed concerns, the overt propositional sense of the discourse” (Black, 1970: 113).

The introduction of the terminology of personae provides a specific tool for the study of textual subject positions; it points to the role played by texts in the constitution of first and third as well as second personae. In fact the concept of the persona, originally referred to the first person (singular or plural), and it “…encourages rhetoricians to think of the ‘I’ in a speech or writing as something constructed by the speaker or writer” (Brooke, 2001: 569). Thus, we may study the textual constitution of senders as well as audiences, and it becomes possible to investigate the relationship, which the text establishes between the first and second personae – does the first person plural refer to a collective author such as an organisation with which the audience is related, but not identified, or does it establish a common position for author and audience? Sometimes the relationship between first and second personae – be it of co-operation or identification – is established positively through an account of the similarities between the two positions, but often the relationship emerges negatively by way of that with which neither second nor third persona is identified. This constitutive outside or third persona is the ‘other’ of the utterance, the ignored positions, unaddressed and excluded groups (Wander, 1999, p. 376).

The concepts of first, second and third personae point to the rules for producing discourse that are operative in the context of a given utterance; which subject positions are available to author and audience and which are perceived as untenable? And which room for (inter-)action do these positions create? However, these questions are not answered by a mere identification of the three personae in the text. Rather, one must study how the first, second, and third personae are constituted; the analysis should explain the rhetorical strategies and argumentative schemes that go into creating and relating personae, in order to establish the underlying discursive rules, which find their specific expression at the rhetorical level of the text. Thus, we return to the notion of the interdependence of repetition and...
creativity; specific utterances are produced within existent discursive boundaries, but the rhetorical strategies that are available within these boundaries, may be used creatively to establish new meanings at the level of the utterance as well as at the broader discursive level. Moreover, as each utterance points to existing discursive rules, it also hints at the ways in which the rules may be bended or broken. Hence, even utterances, which establish personae that are in harmony with existing discursive rules, point to the ways in which the identity and agency of the addressed subject could be altered and extended. It is this interrelationship between rhetoric and discourse, between agential potential and structural boundaries, that the analysis ultimately aims at uncovering.

**Supplying peace of mind – presentation of Tryg**

Before turning to the close reading of how diversity is performed at Tryg a short presentation of the company and its diversity policy is in order. As an insurance company with the vision of being the leading peace of mind supplier of the Nordic region⁶ Tryg has a history of social involvement. Peace of mind is not only perceived in terms of individual compensation, but also as prevention, wherefore Tryg, through an independent organisation named the Tryg Foundation, is involved in initiatives, which aim at improving the collective conditions of peace of mind.⁷ The social commitment has also resulted in a high political profile, most pertinently exemplified through activities and statements by Stine Bosse, the company’s CEO. Bosse was a member of a commission on welfare in the 21ˢᵗ century, which was set up by the Danish government and mandated with analysing the current model of the welfare society and suggesting ways of reforming that model. The welfare commission presented its final recommendations in December 2005.⁸

Tryg is also actively involved in the efforts of integrating immigrants and their descendants into society in general and the workforce in particular, one of the hottest issues on the Danish political agenda at the moment. Specifically, Tryg in March 2003 launched a project, which was termed ‘the integration education’ and was to qualify a group of immigrants to take up regular positions as insurance consultants. The project was concluded in February 2005 and was perceived as being successful.

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⁸ [http://www.velfaerd.dk/](http://www.velfaerd.dk/)
since ten people out of an original group of 12 completed the education and nine of these went on to find permanent employment in Tryg.9

Interestingly, Stine Bosse has used her position in the welfare commission as well as her company’s integration initiatives as a platform for commenting on the tone of the public debate on immigration. Bosse suggests that politicians and other participants in the processes of public opinion formation must move beyond the harsh language of ‘us’ and ‘them,’ and she claims that companies must be the spearheads of integration (Tüchsen, 2005: 17). In the attempt to practice what the CEO preaches Tryg has moved beyond specific initiatives and now has a permanent emphasis on the recruitment of people with diverse ethnic backgrounds.10 Moreover, the company has broadened its scope, and it has set up a permanent diversity committee, which is to ensure that Tryg mirrors the demographics of the surrounding society not only in terms of ethnic diversity, but also regarding gender equality, job opportunities for disabled people, and the percentages of young and older people in the company (Tüchsen, 2005: 17).

**Difference is an asset – the rhetorical performance of diversity at Tryg**

The presentation of Trygs’ diversity strategies has shown that the company has a primary, but not exclusive focus on hiring for diversity. In the theoretical section I argued that strategies of recruitment are necessary, but not sufficient elements of diversity management; however, the company’s own emphasis on recruitment, suggests that the close analysis of the textual enactment of diversity should focus on the ways in which diversity is conceptualised in the first meeting between company and prospective employee. The vacancy notice often constitutes this first meeting. Although one may know of an organisation and perhaps hold customer or other types of stakeholder relations with the organisation, it is usually only when reading an actual job ad that one is explicitly addressed by the organisation as a prospective employee and brought to think about whether or not employment at the organisation would be possible and desirable. Vacancy notices describe what the organisation has to offer and what it expects of its employees in terms of job descriptions and professional qualifications, but they also point to the cultural values and personal characteristics, which employees are expected to display. Thus, the notice contains clues as to how one should perform in order to be perceived as belonging to the

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10 The poster, which was quoted in the introduction, forms part of this effort.
organisation, and in that sense it may set the boundaries of the subsequent interaction between individual and organisation.

The vacancy notice does not in and of itself constitute the subject position of the company’s employees, but it does offer a mould for the successful candidate, and it may be studied as the starting point for subsequent interrelations between the individual and the organisation. Today many vacancy notices contain a diversity clause stating that everyone is invited to apply irrespective of age, sex, ethnicity and/or other of the criteria, which are usually associated with diversity. However, such a clause does not say much about how diversity is conceived and enacted in the organisation, and the subject positions that are implied in the notices may indicate much more about the organisation’s actual conception and practice of diversity than the explicit acknowledgement of the diversity clause. It is to the study of such implicit conceptualisations in the case of a particular type of vacancy notices at Tryg that I now turn.

When Tryg is seeking new employees for positions that include an element of training and/or when the company is presenting the career opportunities that it offers, the texts include a section on why the prospective employee should choose to work at Tryg. The section reads thus:

**Why choose Tryg as place of employment?**
Because we first and foremost are a place of development, which offers you the best framework for personal growth and balance no matter where you are in life.

**Capability of action.** We point the way, when you need new challenges. We offer personal development plans, sparring with experienced colleagues, education, and Nordic job opportunities, if you deliver enthusiasm, talent, and initiative.

**Innovation.** A new generation of employees requires a new generation of possibilities. Therefore, we are open to untraditional solutions, if you are an unusual employee. You are welcome to challenge us to equilibrate the work-life balance. It may provide unexpected results!

**Humanity.** We know that tolerance creates growth, and that difference is an asset. Therefore, we see potential in diversity, and welcome everyone, who shares our attitude.11

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11 My translation of:

"Hvorfor vælge Tryg som arbejdsplads?"
Fordi vi først og fremmest er en udviklingsplads, der tilbyder dig de bedste rammer for personlig udfoldelse og balance, uanset hvor du er i livet.

**Handlekraft.** Vi viser vej, når du har brug for nye udfordringer. Vi tilbyder personlige udviklingsplaner, sparring med erfarne kolleger, uddannelser og nordiske jobmuligheder, hvis du leverer engagement, talent og initiativ.

**Nytænkning.** En ny generation af medarbejdere kræver en ny generation af muligheder. Vi er derfor åbne over for utraditionelle løsninger, hvis du er en usædvanlig medarbejder. Du er velkommen til at udfordre os for at få work-life kabalen til at gå op. Det kan give uventede resultater!
In the following I shall explain the rhetorical strategies by which the first, second, and third personae and the relationships between them are constituted in this text, I shall seek to uncover the discursive rules and conceptualisations of diversity, which underlie these positions, and I shall discuss their potential effect on the conceptualisation and performance of diversity at Tryg.

A dialogical relationship between author and audience is established through the rhetorical question, which initiates the text. Although the question – “why choose Tryg as place of employment?” – does not contain any direct pronouns, it is constructed so that the reader might imagine him- or herself posing it to Tryg. This impression is strengthened as the subsequent answer moves from the grammatical infinitive to active speech in which ‘we’ provide ‘you’ with an answer to the question. Thus, the first person plural refers to Tryg as the first persona of the text, and the second persona, which the audience is invited to adopt, is that of a hypothetical employee. Although the text addresses the ‘you’ as if he or she were already employed, the reader is not identified with the ‘we’ of Tryg, but put in a position of possible future identification, and the text is designed to show the benefits of such identification. The text, then, serves as an invitation for the reader to begin his or her transformation from outsider to insider. It provides the reader with reasons why he or she should want to join Tryg; that is, casts the first persona in a positive light. And it presents the outline of the second persona that will be able to join Tryg, thereby supplying the reader with the first glimpse of the discursive rules that will constitute him or her as a subject upon entry into the organisation.

Interestingly, no reference to a third persona is made until the very end of the text, and when the contour of the subject position, which is not acceptable at Tryg, is established, it is as the implicit flipside of “…everyone, who shares our attitude.” All explicit references deal with the relationship between us and you, and the third persona, which does not conform to that relationship, is firmly suppressed throughout the text. However, the final indirect reference to the third persona is important to the transformation of the relationship between the first and second personae. If ‘you’ share ‘our’ attitude, you are welcome to substitute the position of interested outsider

with that of new member, but if you do not share this attitude, the positive relationship of possible employment is shifted to one of indifference, even rejection – if someone with the characteristics of the third persona were to apply, he or she would not be accepted. Thus, the third persona surfaces in the final sentence of the text as a marker of the two alternatives with which the second persona is faced; identifying with the second persona and beginning the process, which will lead to membership of Tryg or rejecting the offered subject position and thereby also the possibility of employment at Tryg.

The rhetorical strategies, which are used to establish the positions of first and second personae and the relationship between them, are predominantly quasi-logical arguments. Quasi-logical arguments are modes of reasoning that imitate the formal reasoning of logic in a nonformal manner. Whereas logical arguments reduce the complexity of claims and warrants in order to make them fit into formal patterns, quasi-logical reasoning loosens or even bends logical rules so as to make them applicable to the complex cases of practical argumentation (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 193). There are, however, also some arguments in the text that are based on the structure of reality; that is, arguments, which rely on our general notions of the relationship between such elements as cause and effect or means and ends (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 262). Finally, the text contains arguments, which seek to establish the structure of reality by example, analogy, and other rhetorical means (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 350).

The transitive relation of implication – if-then – is the most striking quasi-logical pattern of the text, and whereas the establishment of the causal relationship, which warrants a claim, is often implicit in practical reasoning (Brockriede & Ehninger, 1960), it is characteristic of the present text that conditional warrants rather than data and claims are articulated. Thus, it is up to the reader to infer the effect that the warrant might have on his or her relationship with Tryg. There are two instances of this argumentative strategy in its pure form: “We offer personal development plans, sparring with experienced colleagues, education, and Nordic job opportunities, if you deliver enthusiasm, talent, and initiative,” and “we are open to untraditional solutions, if you are an unusual employee.” In both cases the normal sequence of the warrant (if-then), is reversed so that what ‘we’ will do if ‘you’ live up to certain criteria is highlighted. This means that although the logical relationship is one in which the first persona reacts to the second persona, emphasis is placed on the actions of the first
persona. Moreover, the first persona acts as a response to character traits, not actions of the second persona. This is clearest in the second instance where ‘you’ are positioned as an unusual employee, but the first instance where ‘you’ deliver – as opposed to perform – enthusiasm, etc. is also closer to a description of character than to the identification of actions. Thus, the warrant describes a certain type of employee, which elicits a certain response from Tryg, and within this argumentative scheme it is not possible to doubt that Tryg will deliver on its promises. The possibilities, which the argumentative pattern offers the reader, only involve considering whether or not one is willing and able to enter into the relationship between company and employee that the text outlines.

The if-then constructions are closely associated with arguments based on a causal relationship, but since one would be hard pressed to explain the structure of reality that would hold Tryg to its promise, it is evident that this argument relies on its quasi-logical form for the establishment of cause and effect. As a whole, however, the text may be seen as an argument that relies on the structure of reality. The text is structured as a number of reasons in support of the claim that the reader should choose Tryg as place of employment. These different reasons do not support the final claim directly, but rather seek to establish Tryg as a good workplace, and this claim becomes the data in an implicit argument that is warranted in the general notion that we should do what is good for us (or more specifically, we should want a good workplace), wherefore we should work at Tryg. At this level several well-known structures of reality are brought into play: pragmatic evaluation of the positive consequences, which working at Tryg may have (“personal development plans, sparring with experienced colleagues, education, and Nordic job opportunities”), assessment of work at Tryg as means to the end of a good life (“equilibrate the work-life balance”), and the association of employment at Tryg with the direction of the individual’s lifecycle (“personal growth and balance no matter where you are in life”). All these arguments, then, deal with how the first persona may help the second persona fulfil his or her desires and goals, and they provide the reader with reasons to adopt the offered position of the second persona. However, they also build on a certain understanding of the second persona, which it is presupposed that the reader will identify with, and they build on the relation of trust, which is brought in through the presumptions of the quasi-logical argument. The reader, who doubts the sincerity of
the first persona, is effectively, albeit covertly, relegated to the position of third persona.

The text not only contains arguments that rely on their similarity with logical forms and their affinity with tried and true patterns of reality, but also seeks to establish reality in and through the argumentation. Although the two first modes of argumentation contain many clues as to the positioning of first, second and third personae, it is by means of the third group of rhetorical strategies that the subject positions and the relationships between them are developed and substantiated.

Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca detail the constitutive effects of argumentation by example, and of analogies and metaphors, but they recognise that rhetorical figures may also have creative qualities (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 169). In the present text exemplification is found in the list of what Tryg will offer to the employee, who delivers enthusiasm, talent, and initiative. The list both serves as an illustration of the benefits of being employed at Tryg, and it also functions inductively to bring out the general conclusion that Tryg is a good place to work. Note also how the rhythmic list of three, which is used to characterise the second persona in this passage, lends coherence to a list of traits, which might not otherwise be linked. As it is, the person, who identifies with one trait is invited to adopt the two other characteristics as well, and no other argument than the rhythm of the passage is needed.

The formal pattern (Burke, 1969: 58) or ‘reasoning from rhythm’ is also applied in the passage, which establishes that “a new generation of employees requires a new generation of possibilities.” This sentence is structured as a parallelism in which both the repetition of ‘new generation’ and the identical construction of the two halves imply an analogical relationship in which employees and possibilities constitute the theme, which an unmentioned phoros would help explain (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969: 373). The fact that the analogy is not explicated indicates that the rule, which supports the relationship between new employees and new possibilities, is deemed to be both well-established in general and in the case of the employee-possibility relationship in particular. The general rule hinges on the term new, and stipulates that if one part of a pair is changed, so must the other. One may think of ways of explicating the analogy that would support this

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12 Thus, the fact that the third persona only emerges in the last sentence, does not mean that the rest of the text is bereft of a third persona. Any positive construction of a relationship or explicit appraisal of a value implies its reverse, the third persona. The third persona may nevertheless be more or less deeply buried in the text, and in the present text it is thoroughly suppressed until the very end.
general rule (i.e. weather and clothing – if the first change, you change the latter), but it is just as easy to think of examples that would challenge the rule (i.e. cars and roads – you do not replace the latter, just because the former change). Thereby, it becomes clear that although employees and possibilities are clearly related, the causal relationship is by no means necessary. However, the sense of necessity, which is stylistically established through the repetition of ‘new generation’ and the allusion to analogy, is enough to provide the basis of the quasi-logical argument, which follows (if you are special, we are open to untraditional solutions¹³). In combination, the two sentences establish the second persona as encompassing many different subject positions and provide for the adequate accommodation of these different individuals within the collective, which is encompassed by the first persona.

The relationship between first and second persona is developed metaphorically in the passage that reads “we point the way, when you need new challenges.” The understanding of an individual’s life and/or career as a journey is so ingrained that we hardly notice it, it is one of the “metaphors we live by” as Lakoff and Johnson (1980) would say. In the present case, however, the constructive potential of the metaphor is activated in the positioning of Tryg as the guide of the second persona. ‘You’ are literally positioned as needing new challenges at certain intervals in your career, but the ability to identify these challenges and their positive fulfilment is metaphorically reserved for the first persona.

The text’s specific references to Tryg’s understanding of diversity are also metaphorical: “we know that tolerance creates growth, and that difference is an asset.” The economic terminology may literally imply that the effects of diversity should be measured on the bottom line, but the broader statement on the potential of diversity, which follows in the last sentence of the text, suggests that ‘growth’ and ‘asset’ should be understood to also include metaphorical dimensions such as personal development and cultural values. The combined result of both metaphorical and literal meanings is to cast diversity in a positive light not only as an act of charity or social responsibility, but as something, which is valuable in the instrumental sense of casting off benefits.

The positive value of diversity is underlined by the final sentence: “we see potential in diversity, and welcome everyone, who shares our attitude.” Thus, the

¹³ An interesting by-product of this argument is that the scope of the employee-possibility causality is actually narrowed; the need for new possibilities, apparently, does not apply to all members of the new generation of employees, but only the unusual ones.
attitude, which must be shared lest one be relegated to the position of ‘the other’, is
directly linked to the positive evaluation of diversity. This suggests that diversity is a
value in and of itself and that the recognition of this value is the necessary
precondition for the establishment of any relationship between the first and the
second persona. Seeing potential in diversity is established as the basic point at
which there must be total identification between Tryg and the prospective employee
from the very onset of the interaction. Throughout the rest of the text the relationship
between the first and the second persona has been one of co-operation and
negotiation. The individuality of the employee has been recognised by the
organisation, and Tryg has offered not only to accept, but even to support the different
desires and demands of the employees. Thus, the first persona of the organisation
and the second persona of the employee are constituted as being interdependent, but
not identical. However, the value of diversity is the one issue on which the
organisation is not willing to compromise, and the individual must hold to this value if
he or she is to have any chance of becoming a member of the organisation.

The position of not valuing diversity, then, forms the constitutive outside
of the relationship between first and second persona. It is remarkable that the third
persona only emerges at this particular point in the text, but the way in which it
emerges is even more important. “We see potential in diversity, and welcome
everyone, who shares our attitude,” is a paradoxical statement in the same manner as
“at Tryg there is room for everyone. Nevertheless, you’ve got to be something
special." The second half of both statements contradicts the spaciousness, which is
stipulated in the first half; the only difference is that the latter statement demands
distinctive features of the individual, whereas the former stipulates conformity. In
conjunction, the two statements reveal that the paradox may be inherent to Tryg’s
conceptualisation of diversity. The norm of diversity as it is presented in the
organisational context of Tryg implies the exclusion of people, who do not live up to
that norm – either because they do not themselves contribute to diversity or because
they cannot accept the diverse contributions of others. Thus, diversity at Tryg is not a
paradigm, which implies that the organisation has room for anyone; the constitutive
value of diversity may broaden the boundaries of the intelligible subject, but the
organisation is nevertheless a restricted area, and the individual’s proper performance
of diversity is an important prerequisite to his or her entry into that area.

14 This is the slogan of the recruitment campaign, which was presented in the introduction.
The rhetorical use of quasi-logical arguments as well as arguments that either rely on or seek to establish structures of reality, creates an image of Tryg as the author of the text and of the prospective employee as reader, which is both designed to attract employees and to begin the socialisation of the new employee into the organisation. Moreover, the rhetorical strategies establish the relationship between organisation and employee as one of interdependence. The underlying understanding is that both individual identities and organisational culture are dynamic processes, and individual and group are presented as being mutually constitutive. However, the understanding of culture, which underwrites the textual constitution of the relationship between organisation and employee, is not one-dimensional. On the contrary, the rhetorical strategies of the text are indicative of discursive rules that are characteristic of functional, symbolist as well as poststructural perspectives on diversity.

The functionalist conceptualisation is found in the metaphorical construction of diversity as an instrumental asset. The underlying rule of this construction is that diversity is a stable condition of the organisation, something it has and from which it may benefit. Here, it is implied that people enter the organisation with certain characteristics and that these traits are preserved within the organisation. This understanding is most apparent in the establishment of the third persona, since a stable notion of identity and culture is necessary for the identification of the characteristics, which will be allowed into the organisation, and those, which will not. Hence, the first underlying discursive rule is that diversity is a stable trait, which organisations either possess or lack, and which individuals either contribute to in- or decreasing. Furthermore, the employees’ contributions must be both practical in the sense of bringing differences into the organisation, and normative in the sense of having a positive attitude towards the value of diversity as such.

The predominant rhetorical strategies for the establishment of the second persona imply a more dynamic view of both organisation and individual. Thus, the second persona is constructed along the symbolist lines according to which the organisation is identified with its culture, and it is recognised that individuals and organisations are co-constitutive. Although Tryg does give examples of how the individual may influence the organisation (“you are welcome to challenge us […]. It may provide unexpected results!”), emphasis is placed on the ways in which the organisation adapts to (“we are open to untraditional solutions, if you are an unusual employee”), provides the social setting for (“we […] are a place of development, which
offers you the best framework…"), and even directs the individual ("we point the way, when you need new challenges"). Thus, the second persona is positioned as an individual with a malleable identity that must be shielded from unwanted infringement as well as given opportunities to develop through social interaction, and Tryg presents its organisational culture as one, which will provide both the necessary protection and the desired possibilities. The second discursive rule, which the rhetorical strategies rely on and express, elaborates on the notion that organisational diversity is the variation of employees, which was also presented in the first rule, and suggests that variation is not stable once a diverse workforce has been established. Instead, individual identities are understood to be changeable and the organisation is presented as the driver of change. Different employees are understood to have different needs in terms of both stability and change, and the organisation is positioned as catering for these needs.

The relationship between first and second persona, which is established on the basis of the symbolist perspective on organisational culture, partly implies that Tryg’s conceptualisation of the first persona must remain within this discursive mode. Yet the presentation of the organisation as the care-taker of the employees also indicates a more dynamic view of the organisation, one which corresponds to the poststructuralist notion that the organisation is doing culture. From a critical perspective, however, one could argue that what is at stake here is not a full-fledged endorsement of poststructuralism. Instead, Tryg uses the discursive rules that stem from the poststructuralist perspective, strategically and establishes a relationship in which the organisation holds more agency than the individual. The individual is presented as taking up a certain identity position from which he or she may express needs and demands, but the ability to suggest solutions and solve problems primarily lies with the organisation. Hence, the positioning of Tryg as an organisation that is both responsive and willing to change, may actually imply that the organisation maintains the power to define both the problems that require responses, and the changes, which constitute proper responses. In this sense, the discourse of dynamic interaction, which is indicative of a poststructuralist perspective, may have the rhetorical effect of re-enforcing existing power relations rather than altering them. The third underlying rule, then, is that the organisation maintains a privileged position in the establishment of the subject positions of its employees. In providing a framework for the enactment of diversity, Tryg does not become an open field, but continues to
act as the constituent of the types of identities and agencies that will be recognised as meaningful within this particular organisational setting.

The rhetorical use of paradox through which Tryg is opened up to diversity at the same time as the meaning of diversity is foreclosed, is also strategic. Usually, paradoxical constructions imply discursive rules of poststructuralism in which meaning remains undetermined and social relationships emerge from the very tension of the paradox. In the text, however, Tryg employs the paradox in conjunction with a functionalist establishment of the worth of diversity, and in this context the paradox allows Tryg to maintain control over and delimit the potentially diverse interpretations of diversity. In spite of Tryg’s strategic efforts, the discursive rules that are invoked by the paradox, maintain a constitutive potential, which the organisation cannot suppress completely. That is, when Tryg employs the paradox for its own purposes, it also makes this rhetorical strategy and its underlying discourse available to the employees, thereby enabling a re-negotiation of the dominant meanings from within.

As mentioned above, the basic assumptions of poststructuralism include the entwinement of continuity and change and of possibility and restraint. That is, all utterances both contain a conservative potential of repetition and a reformative potential of alteration, and each change that is made both opens up a new room of interaction, new possibilities of preservation and modification, and shuts down options that were formerly available. To put it bluntly, oppression and liberation always go hand in hand; no performance is purely one or the other. From a theoretical perspective, this applies to all utterances, not just those that actually rely on the discursive rules of poststructuralism. Nevertheless, the subversive re-articulations of utterances that are not founded on a poststructural discourse, must somehow break with the assumptions of these utterances, while an alternating repetition of an utterance that relies on the discursive rules of poststructuralism, may remain within the paradigm of that utterance. Thus, the paradoxical statement, which has the strategic effect, of preserving Tryg’s ability to define the proper enactment of diversity, has the constitutive effect of inviting its own subversive re-articulation. The final discursive rule of the text, then, is that diversity is inherently paradoxical; even conforming to a norm of difference is conformity, and as such diversity is never achieved, but only approached through its constant re-articulation.

To Tryg, the implication of the final rule is that the organisation needs the challenges of its employee, not just on specific issues such as the equilibration of the
work-life balance, but on the very conceptualisation of diversity. Only through such constitutive challenges is the performative potential of diversity activated and maintained. Moving beyond the specific organisational setting of Tryg, the discursive rule implies that diversity is always paradoxical; diversity does not appear in any social setting without also bringing up uniformity, and it is only when the constitutive tension of the pair is actually addressed that new possibilities for being and acting differently may emerge. Thus, it is not just the specific rhetorical strategies of the text that has been analysed in this section, which positions diversity as being inherently paradoxical. Rather, the functionalist, symbolist and poststructuralist discursive rules that are all involved in the conceptualisation of diversity as such, imply tensions between stability and change, the group and the individual, conformity and deviance, tensions that cannot be resolved and that constitute the performative potential of diversity.

From ‘being’ to ‘doing’ – performativity in theory and practice

When Tryg admonishes its employees to be special or asks them to share in a positive attitude towards diversity, the subject position that is offered may be one with broader and more blurry boundaries than the position, which traditional managerial paradigms offer. Nevertheless, diversity management as it is practiced by Tryg and as it is theorised from functionalist, symbolist, and poststructuralist perspectives does not just open up the organisation to a multitude of different employees, but continues to position the members of the organisation in certain ways and to make specific discursive rules and social practices available to them. Moreover, this discursive and contextual constitution does not only involve the individual (prospective) members of the organisation, but also affects the organisation as such.

At the level of discourse, then, both organisation and individual is positioned in ways that enable verbal utterances and physical actions while also setting boundaries around what may be said and done within the discursive context. In this sense the discourse of diversity is, indeed, a mode of being; a certain type of individual identity and organisational culture. At the rhetorical level, however, individuals and groups may use discourses strategically as well as constitutively as ways of upholding or shifting the modes of being that are currently available. A particular utterance cannot invent entirely new discursive rules, but it may re-articulate existing discourses in ways that create new meanings and opportunities at
the rhetorical level. Rhetoric, then, contains a performative potential for doing diversity, pointing to the ways in which not only particular utterances and discursive rules, but also individual actors and organisational settings (re-)shape each other in a continuous constitutive process.

The poststructural analysis of the text, which presents prospective employees with reasons to choose Tryg, has attempted to point out the relationship between rhetorical strategies and discursive rules, which positions both organisation and individuals in relation to diversity. On the basis of this analysis, the initial question of what 'being special' means to Tryg and its prospective employees may be answered. The organisational position of diversity is revealed to place the individual in a situation of strain, in which aspects of conformity and divergence must be negotiated. Tryg is inviting the individual to take up a subject position, which should both be different from and similar to the position of all the other members of the organisation, but does not offer specific clues as to what will be considered the best mix of uniqueness and uniformity. Thereby, the individual is both granted freedom to manoeuvre and left shuffling to fulfil an elusive ideal. Just as the norm of diversity, as articulated in the text, puts pressure on the individual in ways that are both enabling and delimiting of personal identity and agency, it also creates tension at the level of organisational culture and collective action. Here, Tryg is faced with the task of interacting with its members in ways that do not align the individuals with the organisational setting, but rather allow each and every member to develop freely according to his or her personal preferences and potential. At the same time, however, Tryg is not willing to relinquish control completely, but seeks to ensure that the different developmental patterns of the employees are also beneficial to the organisation. The organisational position, which will fulfil both these aims, is no clearer to Tryg than the optimal employee position is to the individual. Thus, being special implies doing diversity in the sense that Tryg and its employees must constantly re-negotiate the proper meaning of diversity and re-position themselves along the lines of the meaning that is prevalent at any given moment.

The analysis has supported the theoretical claim that diversity is a multifaceted concept and also, I believe, lent credence to the claim that poststructuralism offers the perspective that is best suited to the investigation of practices of diversity. As a theory, poststructuralism is based on a notion of difference, which makes it particularly sensitive to the dilemmas and impasses that may characterise attempts
to further diversity in organisational settings. Moreover, poststructuralism, especially as applied in a rhetorical-discourse analytical mode, is able to explain the influence that other theoretical perspectives may have at the conceptual level of the studied text. At the theoretical level we must choose between one perspective and the other, but at the practical level it is possible to form meaningful utterances on the basis of presuppositions that are not internally coherent. It is an important aim of the poststructural analysis to explain how various presuppositions – discursive rules and social practices – are expressed in and interact through utterances and actions.

The theory of performative diversity offers a platform for the analysis of existing enactments of diversity, but also presents a starting point for future theoretical and practical efforts in the field of diversity management. Theoretically, performative diversity provides an understanding of individual identities and organisational cultures that explains the co-constitutive relationship between the two instead of privileging one over the other. Moreover, the theory explains the constitutive interaction of such opposites as continuity and change, sameness and difference. Thereby, it provides the basis for an understanding of diversity that does not seek to explain away the inherent contradictions of the concept, but rather bases the explanation upon them.

At the practical level, performative diversity implies that diversity is not an organisational trait, which can be acquired once and for all through new recruitment strategies or special projects, nor is it a phenomenon, which can be handled by means of a specific set of managerial practices. In the performative conception diversity must constantly be articulated and enacted throughout the organisation. All of the social interaction that goes on within the organisation is co-constitutive of the employees’ identities and the organisational culture, and even when diversity is not directly addressed, the room for intelligible subject positions is negotiated, wherefore the issue of how diverse the organisation can be is constantly at stake. In addition, the understanding of what diversity is and how it may be expressed is implied in the interrelationship between individual and organisation. Explicit statements on and policies of diversity may offer a certain performative potential, but the potential is only released in interaction at the specific level. Thus, the organisation may create a platform for diversity through recruitment programmes and policy statements, but the actual performance of diversity is a continuous process. If the organisation and its
members were ever to stop doing diversity, the possibility of being a multifarious organisation with special members would be foreclosed.

References


Tryg: [http://tryg.dk/netinsurance01/notes.do?uniklink=TrygEnglish&csref=_Forsiden_English](http://tryg.dk/netinsurance01/notes.do?uniklink=TrygEnglish&csref=_Forsiden_English)


Velfærdskommissionen: [http://www.velfaerd.dk/](http://www.velfaerd.dk/)


