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A Systemic Approach to Diversity Managemeny

Creation of Alternatives Through Reflective Practice

Master's thesis

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Preface and Acknowledgements

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a methodology that relate to the operationalizing of empirical research and practice of diversity management seeking to challenge inequality and enact change. The methodology builds on principles from action research.

Diversity management have received increasing attention in enterprises that wants to engage in reducing inequalities within the organization. New legal requirements in Norway also actualizes the topic through the "activity duty and the duty to issue a statement" taking effect from the year of 2020 as part of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. This calls for organizations to engage in how to work with equality and diversity.

This study is a case study that takes a qualitative approach to engage in intervening into a Norwegian company. Semi-structured interviews are conducted to explore the situation within the company, and an intervention strategy is developed to engage with practice. The intervention strategy is a two-hour workshop that centers reflection as a tool create change. The goal of the intervention is to create dialogue for new actions to be taken, and throughout this dialogue attend to how one can work with reducing inequalities and promote diversity and inclusion.

The research find that the intervention strategy succeeded in putting different perspectives on the diversity and equality in dialogue with each other. It became noticeable that a diversity and equality is perceived as linked to the organization performing better being an interest of the management of the company, which is a motivational factor for the company. However, throughout the dialogue this perspective was also set in dialogue with other perspective prioritizing interests of the once affected by inequality.

Sammendrag

Formålet med denne oppgaven er å utvikle en metodikk som tar for seg operasjonalisering av empirisk forskning og praksis for mangfoldsledelse som søker å skape endring. Metodikken bygger på prinsipper fra aksjonsforskning.

Mangfoldsledelse har fått økende oppmerksomhet i virksomheter som ønsker å engasjere seg i spørsmål knyttet til likestilling og mangfold. Nye lovkrav i Norge aktualiserer også temaet gjennom aktivitets- og redegjørelsesplikten som trer i kraft fra 2020 som en del av likestillings- og antidiskrimineringsloven. Dette krever at organisasjoner engasjerer seg i hvordan de skal jobbe med likestilling og mangfold.

Denne studien er en casestudie som tar en kvalitativ tilnærming. Semi-strukturerte intervjuer blir gjennomført for å utforske situasjonen i selskapet, og en intervensjonsstrategi er utviklet for å engasjere seg i hvordan man kan jobbe med likestilling og mangfold i praksis. Intervensjonsstrategien er en to-timers workshop som bruker refleksjon som et verktøy for å skape endring. Målet med intervensjonen er å skape dialog om hvordan man kan jobbe med å redusere ulikheter og fremme mangfold og inkludering.

Forskningen finner ut at intervensjonsstrategien lyktes i å sette ulike perspektiver på mangfold og likestilling i dialog med hverandre. Det ble merkbart at mangfold og likestilling knyttes til at organisasjonen blir mer lønnsom og presterer bedre, noe som er en motivasjonsfaktor for selskapet. Men gjennom dialog ble dette perspektivet også satt i dialog med andre perspektiver som prioritert interessene til de som påvirkes av ulikestilling.

Content

1 Introduction

In 2018, the world's first standard of diversity management was introduced through the Norwegian Standard of Diversity Management Systems – NS 11201:2018 (Standard Norge). Both present organisations and future organisations will have a diverse workforce, and equality within work and organisation has been on the agenda of both policies and the public debate ever since women entered the paid working life. Two of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically goal five (gender equality), and goal ten (reduced inequalities), stress the issue of inequality (United Nations n.d.). The topic is further actualized by "activity duty and the duty to issue a statement" taking effect from the year of 2020 (LDO n.d.) as part of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act.

Workforce diversity management has over the past few decades become an increasingly important part of human resource management (Davis, Frolova, Callahan 2015). According to McCuiston et al. (2004), as referenced in Davis et al. (2015), properly implemented policies promoting workforce diversity can have several benefits:

> "an improved bottom line; increased competitive advantage, superior business performance, higher levels of employee satisfaction and loyalty; a strengthened relationship with multicultural communities, and attracting the best and brightest candidates" (Davis et al. 2015, p. 81)

However, Thomas and Ely (1996) and Ely and Thomas (2020) argue that there exist flawed assumptions about diversity and the benefits of having a diverse workforce among business leaders around the world. They argue that business leaders "misconstrue or ignore what abundant research has now made clear: Increasing the numbers of traditionally underrepresented people in your workforce does not *automatically* produce benefits" (Ely and Thomas 2020, para. 5). Instead, how the organization harness diversity and its willingness and ability to reshape power structures is critical to realise the benefits of diversity. Despite addressing the importance of reshaping power structures, Ely and Thomas (2020) do not address explicitly power from a structural perspective. Their focus is on the individual level, addressing individual's experience of systems of subordination and discrimination, with the consequence of leaving diversity unexploited. Their solution to the issue remains on the individual relying on the action of leaders to solve the issue.

Within diversity management, critical work has drawn attention to the issue of power dynamics in organizations. However, contributing to the debate of diversity policies, the critical studies have

seldom engaged with practice and the action required to develop more inclusive and equal organizations (Holck, Muhr, Villesèche 2016). Feminist studies on work and organization have also drawn attention to power structures and identified barriers to creating equality in organizations. Acker (2006), for example, takes an intersectional approach by introducing the term *inequality regimes* to explain why organizational change projects aiming to reduce inequalities often fail. By examining different bases of inequality, she argues that differences concerning gender, race and class are embedded and reproduced in the organizational structures, processes and practices. Rodriguez, Holvino, Fletcher and Nkomo (2016) further argue that "intersectionality has not been fully utilised to explore structures of discrimination and systems of power and inequality" (p. 202) in the field of organization and work. We therefore lack knowledge about how diversity management practices can deal with these underlying mechanisms and processes that reproduce inequality through change management.

Holvino and Kamp (2009) argues that organization change and strategy are among the topics within diversity management that are understudied and call for better collaborations between practitioners and researchers to bridge the gap between the "benefit" discourse and "critical" discourse of diversity management. In order to achieve this, they call for researchers to engage in what they describe as less popular research methodologies within management knowledge, like participatory action research, where dialogue can lead to new action.

According to Jackson (2001) *critical systems thinking* (CST) was developed to analyse complex societal problems and provide solutions to such problems. Central to the theory is management of complexity and the power issues arising within management practice (Flood and Romm 1996). CST takes a holistic approach to understanding and describing social phenomena and has a critically reflective view of social human systems. Jackson (2001) argues that CST's ability to provide the bigger picture is what allow for the analysis of complex societal problems and offer the possibility to intervene in such problems. Through its commitments to *critical awareness, pluralism* and *improvement,* the practice of systems thinking seeks to design interventions that is critical reflexive of the choice of methodologies and the context within a methodology is to be used (Jackson 2019).

The research question is:

How can a (system) methodology be developed to relate to the operationalizing of empirical research and practice of diversity management seeking to challenge inequality and enact change?

To answer the research question, I will introduce the theoretical groundings that the thesis is based in and present literature from within critical systems thinking, intersectionality and action research. Further, I will demonstrate how principles form the three traditions can be used to develop a research methodology that I will test by carrying out an intervention strategy within a Norwegian company. Lastly, I will evaluate how it worked out.

2 Systems Theory

3.1 From General Systems Theory to Critical Systems Thinking

Systems thinking emerged as a response to reductionism, and Ludwig von Bertalanffy is seen as one of the founding fathers through his publication of a collection of essays called *General System Theory* (Jackson, 2019). While reductionism seeks knowledge and understanding by breaking phenomena down into parts and study the characteristics of its parts, systems thinking takes a holistic approach and is concerned with building up whole pictures of social phenomena. With its holistic approach, systems theory makes it possible to understand phenomena as an "emergent property of an interrelated whole", and emergence and interrelatedness are fundamental ideas of systems thinking (Flood 2010, p. 269). von Bertalanffy (1971), as cited in Jackson (2019), derived his insights form biology, but argued that there exist general system principles that apply to complex systems of all types, regardless of its context:

> Thus, there exist models, principles and laws that apply to generalized systems or their subclasses, irrespective of their particular kind, the nature of their component elements, and the relations or 'forces' between them. It seems legitimate to ask for a theory (...) of universal principles applying to systems in general.
> (von Bertalanffy 1971, p. 31)

From general systems theory, systems thinking has evolved through three overlapping 'waves' that build upon the previous one – namely *hard systems thinking*, *soft systems thinking* and *critical systems thinking* (Midgley 2000, cited in Lewis 2016). Hard systems thinking is concerned with using system models to represent the real world, aiming to describe and in some cases predict the behaviour of systems existing out there in the real world (Jackson 2019). Hard systems thinking include, but is not limited to, operational research, systems analysis and systems engineering.

The field of organizational analysis embraced systems thinking and saw "organisations as complex systems made up of interrelated parts most usefully studied as an emergent whole" (Flood 2010, p. 271). However, through the application of systems thinking to social organisational contexts, it became clear that "a social model built on biological concepts places too much emphasis on structure and function (Flood 2010, p. 275). Flood argues that systems thinking provided limited insight into social affairs, such as cultural activities, political trading and power struggles. With the critique of hard systems thinking by several systems thinkers of that time (like R. Flood, P.B.

Chekland, M.C. Jackson, C. West Churchman and W. Ulrich), new ideas of systems thinking emerged.

Checkland and Scholes (1990) presented three characteristics of a human problem situation. They argued that different people have different worldviews and will pursue different interests. However, these worldviews are not static, but will change. Finally, human beings will attempt to take what they consider to be purposeful action in response to their experience of the world. These three characteristics are the origin of *soft systems methodology* (SSM, Checkland 1981; Checkland and Scholes 1990) – "the most thoroughly documented and discussed methodological example of soft systems thinking" (Flood 2010, p. 277).

With the introduction of soft systems thinking, the idea "that there are real systems in the world that can be identified and improved" (Flood 2010, p. 267) was challenged. Soft systems thinking criticises the use of system models to represent the social world. Instead, soft systems thinking argues that system models can be used as a hermeneutic tool in meaning construction. Soft systems thinking has an interpretative understanding of the system and "understands reality as the creative construction of human beings" (Jackson 1991, cited in Flood 2010, p. 276). Flood (2010) also makes a distinction between the terms "systems thinking" and "systemic thinking", where he argues that the first takes an approach to the systems as if the social world is comprised of real social systems existing in the real world, while the latter sees only the social construction of the world as systemic.

In addition to its interpretative approach, the participative principle is a pillar stone of soft systems thinking (Flood 2010; Flood and Finnestrand 2019). Building upon the idea that a human situation holds different worldviews and perceptions of the social reality, including the perspectives off all stakeholders involved is essential to achieve a meaningful understanding of any situation. However, Flood (2010) argues that soft systems thinking "neglects certain difficulties in achieving open and meaningful debate" (p. 279). Jackson (2019) exemplifies this with a heads up to the use of soft systems methodology:

> "the use of soft systems methodologies, which are dependent upon free and open debate to justify results, may have unintended social consequences if the conditions for such debate are absent."
> (Jackson 2019, p. 152)

Flood (2010) argues that the critique of soft systems thinking concludes that soft systems thinking failed to address power and social transformation for liberating praxis and the critique emerged into critical systems thinking.

3.2 Critical Systems Thinking

There is no single approach to critical systems thinking (CST) that gives a clear and unitary definition of fixed principles of critical systems thinking (Flood 2010). Instead, the term has developed through the influence of several systems thinkers. According to Jackson (2019), the ideas of critical systems thinking were derived from two important sources – social theory and the systems approach. While the social theory enabled critique of the theoretical assumptions that different systems approaches made about social reality and social science, the systems approach itself provided CST the philosophy of holism, important concepts and a range of methodologies and methods. Jackson (2019) further suggests that CST draw on the complementary strengths of social theory and systems thinking. He argues that the social sciences have a strong theoretic grounding in emphasising the ontological and epistemological assumptions the theories make in generating new knowledge and suggest that the social sciences can provide systems thinking with reflecting on interventions' theoretical groundings and improving its methods and methodologies. On the other hand, he argues that systems thinking can assist the social sciences in attending to practice by making theoretical findings more relevant to practical use by "encapsulating them in well-worked out methodologies for bringing about change" (Jackson 2019, p. 517). This way, critical systems thinking provide for the linking between theory and practice.

3.2.1 Core Commitments of CST

Jackson (2019) describes the philosophy and theory of critical systems thinking in terms of three core commitments: *critical awareness*, *pluralism* and *improvement*. He argues that these three terms take account for the new developments of CST, but also advocates that there is a continuous debate around these three themes and that consensually definitions have not been agreed upon. Flood (2010) also specify a commitment to the systems idea as, well as Jackson's core commitments. He suggests that CST holds the "systemic thinking" view of social systems, rather than "systems thinking", rejecting the "notion of a concrete social world that compromise real social systems" (p. 275). In the next paragraph, follows an explanation of the three commitments.

Critical awareness can be divided into two aspects: "theoretical awareness" and "social awareness". Theoretical awareness is concerned with questioning the theoretical assumptions underlying different systems methodologies and addressing their strengths and weaknesses to uncover what kind of complexity the methodology can grasp. Social awareness is concerned with the social context in which a system methodology is used and the consequences of adopting certain theories and its associated concepts. In other words, social awareness is concerned with the impact systems methodologies can have on the society. Another aspect of social awareness is "the need to reflect on the societal and organizational 'climate' within which we intend to use systems methodologies" (Jackson 2019, p. 582). Here, Jackson (2019) suggests that the 'climate' of the specific context and situation you wish to apply a system methodology to, can limit the pool of methodologies suitable and available for use, meaning that a dominant preference of a certain methodology or way of viewing the world in a specific context or culture can limit the possibility to employ a methodology at odds with the dominant preference. Flood (2010) presents an example of how "dominance in western societies of the scientific method and its insistence on learning through generalisations" (p. 279) limits alterative methodologies emphasising a different approach to knowledge creation.

Pluralism refers to the variety of systems methodologies available for a practitioner to choose from when designing an intervention, such as the Viable System Model (VSM, Beer 1984), Soft Systems Methodology (SSM, Checkland and Scholes 1990) and Critical Systems Heuristic (CSH, Ulrich 1994), and the possibility to use different methodologies in combination to address different purposes. Flood (2010) states that critical systems thinking finds integrity in its diversity of different systems methodologies available to choose from.

Finally, Jackson (2019) argues that *improvement* "should embrace efficiency, efficacy and effectiveness, viability and sustainability, mutual understanding, empowerment, and emancipation" (p. 589). The commitment to improvement has often been confused with commitment to emancipation only, stemming from a confusion between critical systems thinking and emancipatory systems thinking. Since its inception, CST has put emancipation on the agenda. However, "it was made clear that 'emancipation' was only one of the three human interests that, following Habermas, CST needed to reinforce" (Jackson 2019, p. 588). Following the commitment to pluralism, improvement should take into account all paradigms of systems thinking, and a successful intervention should be able to state progress on all indicators of improvement (Jackson 2010). However, Jackson (2019) suggests that while there exist a variety of

system methodologies that embrace the indicators of improvement, there is still a need to develop systems methodologies that can handle the emancipatory concern.

3.3 Critical Systems Thinking and Practice

Systems thinkers generally engage with practice through the application of its associated systems methodologies and methods adhering to specific systems paradigms. With a range of systems methodologies to choose from, managers and managements scientists are faced with a difficulty in how to choose and employ the methodology or the mixing of methodologies most suitable for the problem situation at hand (Flood and Jackson 1991). By uncovering the strengths and weaknesses of all systems approaches, CST finds it sensible to use the systems methodologies in combination to complement each other (Jackson 2001). Embracing its commitment to pluralism, CST engages with practice through a multimethodological approach (Jackson 2019). Put simply, "the idea of multimethodology (MM) is to use a combination of methodologies (possibly from different paradigms) and methods together in a single intervention" (Jackson 2019, p. 531).

A challenge with operating in a multiparadigm manner is "paradigm incommensurability" (Jackson 2019). According to Mingers and Brocklesby (1997), paradigm incommensurability occurs due to divergence of the fundamental assumptions about the real world and how knowledge is created, that different paradigm takes. They describe that different paradigms hold competing "truths", represented as dichotomies, that resist reconciliation, such as objectivist versus subjectivist or structure versus agency. Different systems thinkers have acknowledged the challenge of paradigm incommensurability and developed different MM approaches that each gives its proposal on how the resolve the challenge (Mingers and Brocklesby 1997; Jackson 2019). For the purpose of this thesis, that seek to guide practice, its sufficient to know of the theoretical challenge that paradigm incommensurability pose. I will therefore not go into the details on how different systems thinkers resolve the challenge, but rather proceed with paying attention to the more practical challenge presented in the beginning of this section – how practitioners can choose between different systems approaches.

3.3.1 System of Systems Methodologies

Jackson (2019) presents the System of Systems Methodology (SOSM), introduced by himself and Paul Keys in 1984 and later extended by Jackson, as the door opener to the MM approach. The SOSM is an "ideal-type" grid of problem contexts – describing ideal contexts, not actual problem contexts – that can be used to classify system methodologies at the bases of their assumptions

about the problem situations. The grid provides guidelines that highlight the strengths of different system methodologies and suggest for which situations the use of a methodology is favoured (Flood and Jackson 1991).

The original grid has two dimensions; "one defining the nature of the systems, on a continuum of 'simple' to 'complex', and the other the nature of the relationship between participants as 'unitary', 'pluralist' or 'coercive'" (Jackson 2001, p. 237). Flood and Jackson (1991) sums up the characteristics of the different categories along the two dimensions. Simple systems are characterized by having a small number of elements or subsystems where the interactions between them are predetermined and its behaviour is governed by well-defined laws that do not evolve over time. In contrast, a complex system is characterized by having a large number of elements and subsystems that interact with each other in a loosely structured manner. Moreover, complex systems evolve over time as the system is affected by its own parts as well as influenced by its environment. Participants having a unitary relationship share common interests, values and beliefs and largely agree upon ends and means. All participants are involved in decision-making and act in accordance with their common objectives. Pluralist relationships are characterized by having a "basic combability of interest" (p. 34) and the participants share values and beliefs to some extent. Although they don't necessarily agree upon means and ends, compromise can be achieved through debate and all participants are involved in the decision-making. Jackson (2001) defines the coercive context as "situations where there is little common interest shared between stakeholders, there is fundamental conflict, and the only consensus that can be achieved arises from the exercise of power" (p. 237). Moreover, all participants affected are not necessarily involved in the decision-making process. Figure 1 shows the SOSM grid providing the different "ideal type" problem contexts.

| | | **PARTICIPANTS** | | |
		Unitary	Pluralist	Coercive
SYSTEMS	Simple	Simple-unitary	Simple-pluralist	Simple-coercive
	Complex	Complex-unitary	Complex-pluralist	Complex-coercive

By uncovering the underlying assumptions that systems approaches make about the problem context, the systems methodologies can be grouped on the SOSM grid (Flood and Jackson 1991). Systems methodologies adhering to the hard systems paradigm are assumed to view the problem situation as simple-unitary context, approaches like the Viable System Model (VSM) and Socio-Technical Systems (STS) are associated with the complex-unitary context, and different soft systems approaches, like the above-mentioned Soft Systems Methodology (SSM), with the pluralist context (Jackson 2001). However, Jackson (2001) argues that "it was hard to find systems methodologies that were based on coercive assumptions" (Jackson 2001, p. 237). He further suggests that the recognition of the coercive context situations in management science made the call for the critical approach in systems thinking, and states that "thus a concern with 'emancipation' and the ethics of intervention (...) came to be a defining characteristic of critical systems thinking" (Jackson 2010, p. 237).

However, being on the agenda of CST from its inception, Jackson (2019) argues that too little attention has been given to developing the emancipatory concern of CST. He further suggests that this is illustrated by the "empty space on the right-hand side, especially the upper-right hand side, of the SOSM figure" (p. 590), as showed in Figure 2 below.
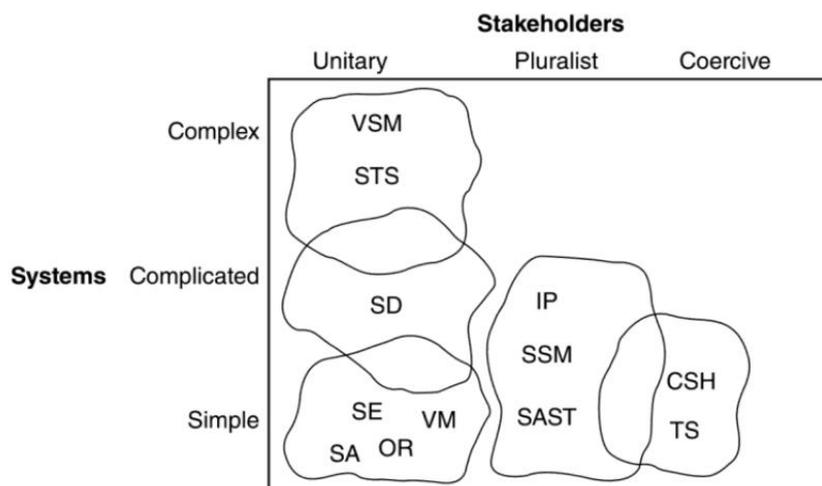

Figure 2: The major systems methodologies positioned on an updated version of the SOSM grid. Jackson (2019) presents an extended version of the SOSM grid where a new category is added along the systems dimension ("complicated") to better distinct the systems methodologies from each other. Also, the

"participants" dimension has changed its label to "stakeholders" to better account for those affected by the systems design, but not involved in the decision-making process. (Adapted from Jackson 2019, p. 512)

3.3.2 Critical Systems Heuristic (CSH)

Critical Systems Heuristic (CSH) is a systems methodology developed by Werner Ulrich. The methodology put emancipation at its heart by insisting that the perspectives of those affected by a systems design, but not involved in the decision-making process, must be taken into account (Ulrich 2003). He seeks to give a voice to those "affected but not involved" and to pay attention to those disadvantaged by a systems design. Central to the methodological approach of CSH is reflecting on the boundary judgements made when intervening in problem situations – that is which perspectives are considered relevant and which are ignored or considered less important (Ulrich 2012). The boundary judgements made by a stakeholder defines their reference system, which can be translated into what is considered the 'relevant context' and how a problem situation is framed (Ulrich 2005).

For the purpose of revealing the reference system of different stakeholders and the boundary judgements they employ, Ulrich has developed 12 boundary categories and 12 corresponding boundary questions as shown in table 1, adapted from Jackson (2019). The questions are asked in two modes – is-mode, which unveils what is the case, and ought-mode, which serves to imagine alternative systems and what should be the case (Ulrich 2012). The framework seeks to explore who benefits and who is disadvantaged from different framings of the reference system, as well as reaching mutual understanding between stakeholders holding different reference systems to aim on establishing a shared reference system if possible, alternatively increase mutual tolerance between stakeholders.

Sources of influence	Boundary judgments informing a system of interest (S)			
	Social roles (stakeholders)	Specific concerns (stakes)	Key problems (stakeholding issues)	
Sources of motivation	1) *Beneficiary* Who ought to be/is the intended beneficiary of the system (S)?	2) *Purpose* What ought to be/is the purpose of S?	3) *Measure of improvement* What ought to be/is S's measure of success	The involved
Sources of control	4) *Decision-maker* Who ought to be/is in control of the conditions of success of S?	5) *Resources* What conditions of success ought to be/are under the control of S?	6) *Decision environment* What conditions of success ought to be/are outside the control of the decision-maker?	
Sources of knowledge	7) *Expert* Who ought to be/is providing relevant knowledge and skills for S?	8) *Expertise* What ought to be/are relevant new knowledge and skills for S?	9) *Guarantor* What ought to be/are regarded as assurances of successful implementation?	
Sources of legitimacy	10) *Witness* Who ought to be/ is representing the interests of those negatively affected by but not involved with S?	11) *Emancipation* What ought to be/are the opportunities for the interests of those negatively affected to have expression and freedom from the worldview of S?	12) *Worldview* What space ought to be/is available for reconciling differing worldviews regarding S among those involved and affected?	The affected

Table 1: The boundary categories and corresponding boundary questions of CSH. (Adapted from Jackson 2019, p. 483).

While the frameworks of CSH presented by Ulrich offers the possibility to uncover the different reference systems that stakeholders adhere to, as well as how to go about to create dialogue between the stakeholders with the aim of developing a shared understanding of the problem situation, it receives critique for the lack of "a social theory to explain how inequalities of class, status, gender, etc. arise in the first place and are sustained" (Jackson 2019, p. 502).

So far, we've seen how the field of systems thinking has developed, where critical systems thinking come from and how it seeks to engage with practice. The latest introduction of the SOSM grid has provided us with guidelines on how to choose among the range of systems methodologies available for practitioners to intervene in problem situations. In the introduction to this thesis, the

role of power structures in diversity management was issued, and the research question gives promises of providing implications for diversity management practice. Given the issue of power, we can suspect that a systems methodology at the right-hand side of the SOSM grid may be suitable for engaging with practice within diversity management. However, a more thorough argument is needed. For this, we need a framework explaining how unequal power relations occur. Intersectionality provides this framework. I will therefore proceed with introducing the notion of intersectionality and throughout the discussion make linkages to systems thinking.

3 Intersectionality

Thinking about power relations and power structures as systemic is prominent within theories of intersectionality. The term intersectionality originates from the Black Feminist movement in Northern-America and is often coined to Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw (1989) addressed the legal framework's inability to protect black women from discrimination resulting from the intersection of gender and race. She argued that oppression can result from plural sources intersecting and reinforcing each other, making it possible to describe a hierarchy of oppression where those on top of the hierarchy are oppressed "but for" one source of discrimination – for instance race, gender or class, and those at the bottom experience oppression resulting from several markers of difference. Crenshaw (1989) saw oppression and discrimination resulting from an interconnectedness of different systems of power and positioned the linkages between these systems as the object of analysis, rather than analysing oppression in terms of single dimensions independent of each other. Crenshaw (1989) also argued that the traditional understanding of discrimination and oppression as stemming from single sources, contributed to marginalising those with an experience deviant from the dominant experience of oppression. In other words, the experience of oppression stemming from multiple sources was recognized only to the extent the experience overlapped with the experience of those disadvantaged by a singular factor. After its introduction, the term has developed to a broad and complex term, with a variety of definitions and applications, within both interdisciplinary and traditional academic fields, as well as political activism (Collins 2019).

3.1 Intersectionality Within Work and Organization

By reviewing the theory and praxis of intersectionality in work and organizations, Rodriguez et al. (2016) present two distinct approaches to intersectionality within this field. The first approach is concerned with the consequences of inequalities for individuals and groups, and the second approach "embeds subjectivities within systemic dynamics of power and explore intersections to highlight these dynamics and make them visible and available for analysis" (Rodriquez et al. 2016, p. 202). However, "intersectionality has not been fully utilised to explore structures of discrimination and systems of power and inequality" (p. 202) in the field of organization and work.

Rodriquez et al. (2016) highlights the work of Joan Acker as contributing to "a more systemic view of intersectionality" (p. 202). Acker (1990) introduced the term of "gendered organisation"

to address the structural dimensions of gender inequality. She argued that the gender inequalities are built into the organizational structures and identified organizational processes as central in reproducing inequality. Acker (2006) later took an intersectional approach by extending her argument to include the inequalities of race and class. With the term "inequality regimes" she suggested that the inequalities concerning gender, race and class are embedded and reproduced in the organizational structures, processes and practices.

3.2 Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory

With the aim of exploring intersectionality's potential as a critical social theory, Collins (2019) examine intersectionality as a metaphor, its heuristic thinking and its paradigmatic thinking. She argues that "collectively, they describe a conceptual foundation or cognitive architecture for developing intersectionality as a critical social theory" (Collins 2019, p. 24). Through her examination, Collins construct a conceptual framework of intersectionality providing its cognitive architecture. The framework is presented in figure 3.

DIMENSIONS OF CRITICAL THINKING

METAPHOR

....

HEURISTIC

....

PARADIGM

CORE CONSTRUCTS

Relationality

Power

Social inequality

Social context

Complexity

Social justice

GUIDING PREMISES

Race, class, and gender as systems of power are interdependent

Intersecting power relations produce complex social inequalities

Intersecting power relations shape individual and group experiences

Solving social problems requires intersectional analyses.

Figure 3: The cognitive architecture of intersectionality (Adapted from Collins 2019, p. 49)

3.2.1 The Cognitive Architecture of Intersectionality

Collins (2019) argues that "metaphoric, heuristic, and paradigmatic thinking constitute the critical thinking tools that surround the process of doing social theory" (p. 49). When Crenshaw (1989) introduced the term, it was by referring to the now well-known metaphor of an intersection, where different sources of discrimination come from different directions and meet in the intersection, reinforcing each other. Collins (2019) argue that "the metaphor of intersectionality puts a name and a face to a common project of using more holistic frameworks to explain and address social problems" (p. 41). This way, it enables conceptualising the power systems as interconnected entities, and provides an important thinking tool for the theorizing process of intersectionality.

Collins (2019) present the heuristic of intersectionality as "provisional rules of thumb for rethinking a range of social problems as well as strategies for criticising how scholarships studies them" (p. 41). This places the heuristic of intersectionality in close contact with the practice of intersectionality, providing the taken-for-granted assumptions and guidance for social action. However, facilitating the ease of intersectionality's use, Collins (2019) problematize uncritical use of intersectionality as a heuristic device. To illustrate this, Collins (2019) provide an example that I refer to as "the challenge of parallelism":

> The rapid uptake of intersectionality by adding even more categories suggest a parallelism among these categories, one that implies that each system of power is fundamentally the same. Stated differently, if the categories of race, class, and gender, among others, are equivalent and potential substitutes for one another, then the systems of power that underlie intersectionality are similarly equivalent. Understanding one means understanding the others. This assumption of equivalence and interchangeability may facilitate the intersectionality's ease of heuristic, but it simultaneously limits intersectionality's theoretical potential. [...] The relationships among these categories lie in their particulars – they must be empirically studied and theorized, not simply assumed for heuristic convenience. (Collins 2019, p. 40)

The idea of equivalence and interchangeability prompts the ideas of general systems thinking, emphasising universal principles that applies to universal systems, enabling to transfer knowledge and understanding of one system to another. However, the acknowledgement of the limitations that this way of thinking of the heuristic of intersectionality pose, demonstrates critical awareness of the taken-for-granted assumptions underpinning the heuristic, as well as of the context in which the heuristic is applied within and the consequences of the heuristic in the social world. This yields a potential for intersectionality to draw on the ideas of critical systems thinking.

The discussion of which categories to include and how to understand each system of power, presented in the above example, represent a controversy within intersectionality. Orupabo (2014) argues that paying attention to the specific inequalities of gender, race and class, and viewing them as prefixed categories of intersectionality is one of two dominant approaches to intersectionality. With a reference to Weber (2001), she further suggests that the intersection between class, gender and race is assumed to be social systems that play a role in all situations, regardless of context. The first approach is labelled *the structure-oriented approach.* The other approach, *the poststructuralist approach,* pays attention to the process of "categorization" and suggest that relevant power asymmetries will always depend on the context – one can't take for granted which categories, positions or structures will be of importance (Orupabo 2014). Further, Orupabo argues that the latter approach view inequalities and difference as social constructions. The discussion between the two approaches to intersectionality is somewhat parallel to the ontological discussion within systems thinking, where the "systems thinking" approach, presented by Flood (2010), views the world as constructed of real social systems, while the "systemic thinking" approach rejects this notion and stresses the social construction of the world as systemic.

Lastly, Collins (2019) examine intersectionality and its paradigmatic thinking. She argues that intersectionality contributed to a paradigm shift in how it emphasises power structures as mutually constructing in shaping of social phenomena. In contrast, traditional academic disciplines possessed a paradigm viewing different types of inequality e.g., gender inequality or racial inequality, as distinctive and disconnected phenomena. Collins extends her argument by suggesting that intersectionality "pointed toward a fundamental paradigm shift in thinking about intersecting systems of power and their connections to intersecting social inequalities" (Collins 2019, p. 43). Despite contributing to a paradigm shift in thinking about systems of power, Collins address that intersectionality has yet to specify the content of its own paradigmatic thinking. As a contribution to specifying the content of intersectionality, Collins (2019) identifies six core constructs and four guiding premises as intersectionality's paradigmatic ideas.

3.2.2 Core Constructs and Guiding Premises of Intersectionality

Collins (2019) identifies relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity and social justice as the core constructs of intersectionality, providing the theoretical contours of the term. The following paragraphs give an explanation of the core constructs as described by Collins (2019).

Relationality concerns the interconnectedness and mutual engagements between different systems of power and seeks to describe how systems of power "are constituted and maintained through relational processes, gaining meaning through the nature of these relationships" (Collins 2019, p. 46).

Power is viewed as intersecting power relations that produce social divisions that can't be understood isolated from one another. Rather, the social divisions of race, gender, class, ability, sexuality etc. must be understood as connected variables of social organization. Within social hierarchies, inequality and distinctive social experiences are dependent on and collectively shaped by co-producing systems of power.

Social inequality is viewed as generated by systems of power. With the understanding of social inequality as produced within power relations, the idea of inequality as natural and inevitable is rejected.

Social context is important for understanding how knowledge is produced and is concerned with how "interpretive communities" go about in their production of knowledge of the social world, as well as how communities range and value knowledge. Collins (2019) also suggest that "social context also matters in understanding how distinctive social locations of individuals and groups within intersecting power relations shape intellectual production" (p. 47).

Complexity constitutes another core construct. Collins (2019) argue that intersectionality seeks to manage complexity and further suggest that "intersectional knowledge projects achieve greater levels of complexity because they are iterative and interactional, always examining the connections among seemingly distinctive categories of analysis" (p. 47).

Social justice is the final core construct of intersectionality and "raises question about the ethics of intersectional scholarships and practice" (Collins 2019, p. 47). Collins further suggest that, historically, the commitment to social justice presented an end of intersectional work. However, within contemporary academic venues, the commitment to social justice has been "challenged by norms that place social justice, freedom, equality and similar ethical issues as secondary concerns" (Collins 2019, p. 47).

4 Engagement with Practice

The framework presented by Collins (2019) gives a conceptual explanation of how inequality arise and is sustained within complex and interrelated systems of power. However, as Collins (2019) points to, the relationship between the social systems of power must also be empirically studied. Orupabo (2014) stress that much of the literature within intersectionality studies is not grounded in empirical research but concentrate on theoretical discussions. Also, Rodriguez et al. (2016) call for intersectionality studies within work and organization to take a stronger engagement with practice.

CST, as we've seen, provides for linking between theory and practice through a range of systems methodologies, and the SOSM grid provides guidelines on how to choose on a suitable methodology for engaging with practice. The intersectional framework situates people differently in organizational systems depending on differences concerning gender, race, class etc., and suggest that these differences yield unequal access to power. This suggest that the problem situation that diversity management practice seeks to improve when initiating actions and measures aiming on reducing inequality and promoting equal opportunity for all, can indeed be viewed as a coercive problem situation as described by Jackson (2001). The SOSM grid presented in figure 2 suggests that no systems methodologies are based upon assumptions of a complex-coercive problem situation. Flood and Jackson (1991) suggest that such a methodology would have to consider the following issues:

- The various sources of power in organisations.
- The organisation's culture and the way this determines what changes are feasible.
- The mobilisation of bias in organisations.
- The relationship of hierarchies in organisations to class, sex, race and status divisions in the wider society.

Flood and Jackson (1991, p. 41)

5 Action Research

Executing a research project lies in the intersection of theory and practice – it is where reality meets theory, and new insights are developed through the creation of new knowledge. Critical system thinking (CST) yields promises of engaging with practice through its range of systems approaches and related methods (Jackson 2019) However, as first suggested by Flood and Jackson (1991), we lack the tools to tackle problem contexts that are characterized by being complex-coercive. Jackson (2019) again settles out that too little attention has been given to develop the emancipatory concern of CST, that address the coercive context situation in management science (Jackson 2010). In other words, we may still not possess the tools to sufficiently handle these context situations, but if we believe that social transformation is indeed possible, we can't let that stop us from intervening in them. Only by intervening into these contexts, new insights and knowledge about them can be created.

Action research (AR), originally developed by Kurt Lewin, is a type of research that aims to develop both new insights and action improvement through the research process into a social issue (Flood & Romm 1996). Lewin had a perception that "it is only possible to come to an understanding of a system of interest by trying to change it" (Jackson 2019, p. 68). Jackson (2019) argues that action research has had a significant impact upon applied systems thinking. Also, other researchers within the fields of CST and AR, between another Flood (2010) and Levin (1994), have elaborated on the relationship between CST and AR. Although, at the time of Levin's writing, he argued that "there is hardly any common reference in texts written within each tradition" (p. 25), there now seems to be a wide acceptance that the two strands of thinking go hand in hand, for example illustrated by the existence of the journal Systemic Practice and Action Research (SPAR) (Flood 2017). Flood (2010) summarizes the conceptual convergence of systemic thinking and action research with these words:

> It is through systemic thinking we know of the unknowable. It is with action research that we learn and may act meaningfully within the unknowable. (Flood 201o, p. 142)

Action research

There exist a variety of forms of AR, resulting from significant differences among AR practitioners belonging to a diverse set of disciplines and backgrounds (Greenwood & Levin 2007). They suggest that general overviews of AR are hard to find, in part, due to that a broad set of academic disciplines and their applications within a range of social contexts all have contributed to the development of AR. Education, social services, sociology, anthropology and organizational

behaviour are among the academic disciplines they present as having contributed to its development. They further suggest that some approaches to AR are incompatible due to making contradicting assumptions. Rowell, Riel and Polush (2017) search for a shared understanding of AR through the creation of dialogical spaces among members of what they characterize as the global action research community. When searching for the definitional boundaries of AR, they experienced that it was difficult for members participating in their discussion "to articulate a shared sense of the essence of action research, that is, the special quality without which action research would no longer exist" (p. 91).

Greenwood and Levin (2007) defines AR as "social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or network ("stakeholders") who are seeking to improve the participants' situation" (p. 3). Through taking action, knowledge claims are generated, and AR rejects the separation of thought and action that conventional social science has emphasised, believing that the "other things being equal"-assumption it makes is a false assumption (Greenwood & Levin 2007, p. 62). They suggest that three elements are always present in an action research project. These are action, research, and participation.

However, being elements that unites most practitioners, different meanings are assigned to the elements, depending on the form of AR. Johansson and Lindhult (2008) make a distinction between a pragmatic and critical orientation of AR. They associate the pragmatic orientation with "a focus on praxis and practical knowledge development, cooperation between all concerned parties, and the need for finding and constructing a common ground between them as a platform for action" (p. 100), and the purpose is improvement of workability of human praxis. They associate the Scandinavian orientation, focused on "broad, open and democratically oriented dialogue" among the involved parties, both researchers and organization members, with the pragmatic orientation, represented by, between another, Greenwood and Levin. On the other side, the critical orientation has its potential "where the situation is characterized by unequal power relations or invisible structures that hamper thinking and action" (p. 110) and the process should engage in emancipation and reflective knowledge to "unveil the workings of dominant ideologies and discourses" (p. 112). Table 2 summarizes how the two approach relate two different choices in developing the research design.

Issue	Pragmatic orientation	Critical orientation
Action/research practice	Integration	Separation
Core activity	Experimentation	Reflection
Responsibility for action	Legitimate	Limited
Form of knowledge to be developed	Experiential, practical and conceptual tools	Reflexive (re-descriptions new interpretations), silenced knowledge

Table 2: Critical choices in developing the action research process. Adapted from Johansson and Lindhult (2008), p. 111

Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixion (2014) describe the process of AR in terms of the "self-reflective spiral", illustrated in figure 4. The spiral consists of cycles of:

- Planning a change,
- Acting and observing the process and consequences of the change,
- Reflecting on these processes and consequences, and then,
- Re-planning,
- Acting and observing,
- Reflecting, and so on…

(Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2014, p. 18)
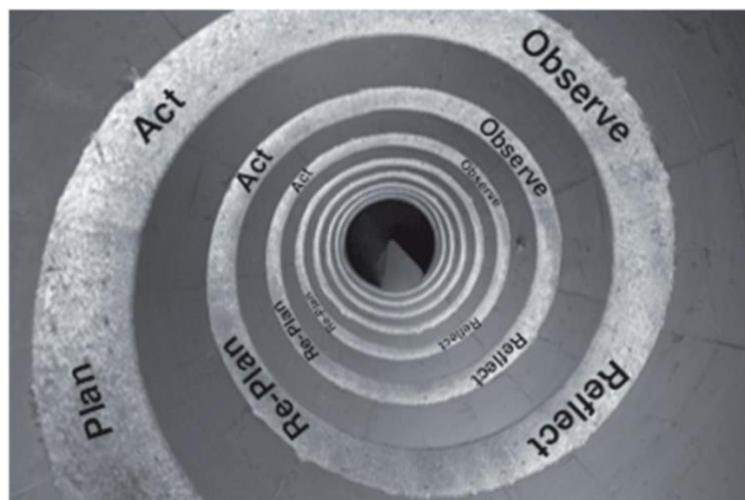
Figure 4: The action research self-reflective spiral, adapted from Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon 2013, p. 19

In this sense, AR is an iterative process where ends and means are set in the planning of a change, and change is enacted through taking action while carefully observing what happens. Then,

engage in reflecting upon the consequences and evaluating improvements in practice, which allows for re-planning by attending to what was discovered and settings new ends and means.

6 Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology and the research design. I will explain how principles from systemic thinking and action research, as well as intersectionality theory have guided the design and methodological choices of the project.

6.1 Research design

This project is designed as a case study. This design was chosen as it provides for creating a deep understanding of the situation within an organization. According to Yin (2018) case studies are an empirical method well-suited for investigating a contemporary phenomenon that you would like to get a deep understanding of within the real-world context in which it exists. The design is based in Jackson's (2020) EPIC-model that consist of four stages. The model is a conceptualization of how to apply the four commitments of critical systems thinking, presented earlier, in practice. The four stages are:

> **Stage 1: E**xplore the problem situation
> **Stage 2: P**roduce an appropriate intervention strategy
> **Stage 3: I**ntervene flexibly
> **Stage 4: C**heck on progress

The model can remind of similar conceptualizations of action research, like the self-reflective-spiral by Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixion (2014).

The EPIC-model consist of several of sub-stages that can be applied in a research based in critical system practice. These sub-stages have not been followed systematically, but the model's main stages have been used as a structure for the research, and adaptions has been made for the study's scope and time-horizon. Next, follows a description of how the model has been adjusted and applied to the particular project.
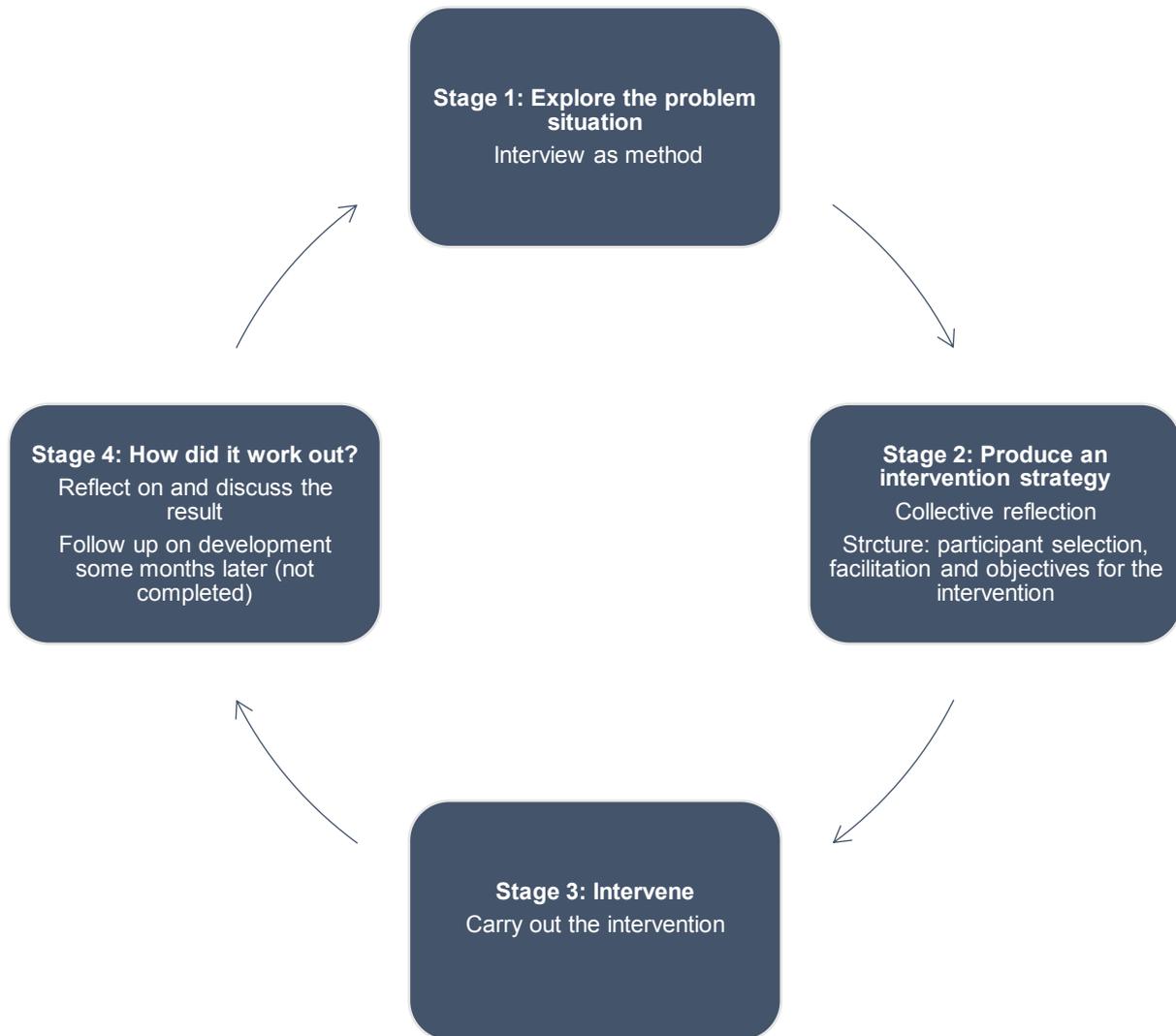
Figure 5: The adjusted EPIC-model. Adapted, with adjustments, from Jackson (2020), p. 16.

Stage 1: Explore the problem situation

Interviews was chosen as method for exploring the problem situation. The goal of the interviews was to map the organization's previous actions related to equality and diversity and get a thorough understanding of how the problem situation is framed and comprehended by different organizational members. The interviews laid the foundation for writing a case description in which previous action is described and motivational factors for working with equality and diversity within the organization is explored. Moreover, provided ideas for producing an intervention strategy, although the planning of an intervention strategy had to be somewhat parallel to ensure that it was possible to carry it out within the given period of time. Chapter 7 presents the empirical data from the interviews.

Stage 2: Produce an appropriate intervention strategy

The intervention strategy was planned by building on ideas from action research, critical systems thinking and intersectionality. A more thorough review of the planning of the intervention is given in chapter 8.

Stage 3: Intervene

A 2-hour workshop was arranged with different organizational members of the case organization and three representatives from NTNU – my supervisors and myself. Chapter 9 attends to the empirical findings of carrying out the intervention.

Stage 4: How did it work out?

Jackson's (2020) fourth step is to check on progress. In this lie evaluating the improvements achieved through the intervention and reflecting upon what the participants learned. Lastly, the participants in the project should agree on which steps to take next, revaluating both ends and means. The intervention strategy has not been evaluated by including the participants, as there has not been time for doing this. However, I will discuss how it worked out and putting this in comparison with former literature in chapter 10.

6.2 Collection of Data

The data collection of the project was twofold and consists of interviews with six members of the organization, as well as an intervention carried out as a workshop where collective reflection around eight reflective questions was chosen as method.

6.2.1 Interview

Interview as a method was chosen as it provides for the possibility to study meaning, attitudes and experiences (Tjora 2021). Taking a social constructivist perspective as made by soft system thinking and critical systems thinking, I was interested in exploring how the informants shape their understanding of the reality based on their views on why an organization would choose to work with equality and diversity specifically, i.e., their own and their perception of the organization's motivational factors. The interviews were organized as semi-structured interviews that offers the informants the opportunity to reflect upon their own experiences and thoughts about the specific topic for the research, but was directed by an interview guide to ensure that the conversation stayed on topic (Bryman 2016; Tjora 2021).

Interview guide

The interview guide formulated questions to shed light on two areas: 1) previous actions – how had the organization engaged in questions regarding equality and diversity, and 2) how is the problem situation presented. The guide was divided into four main sections: definitions of equality and diversity, strategy and objectives, motivation, and employee involvement. The guide is attached in appendix A. There was also an opening section with less formal warm-up questions and final section where the informant had the possibility to add to the topic if desired. All interviews were conducted after the same interview guide, except from one of the interviews. After having carried out the originally planned interviews, it was clear that the CEO of the company had had a central role in initiating previous processes concerning recruitment to the management team. An interview with a more focused guide was therefore conducted with the CEO, after the initial interviews were carried out.

Informants

The informants were selected in such a way that the sample was likely to represent different perspectives on the research topic, in cooperation with my contact person in the organization. The sample includes people from different positions, departments, and levels of the organization. My contact person requested the informants for interview, in which every requested informant accepted the request. In total six interviews were conducted (including the later scheduled interview with the CEO). Table gives an overview of the informants.

	Role
1	CEO
2	Management team member
3	Organizational developer
4	HR-leader
5	Union representative (and business developer)
6	CEO of subsidiary

Table 3: An overview of the informants taking part in the interviews.

Execution of the Interviews

At the time the interviews were conducted, the new norm for arranging meetings was meeting up on digital platforms. Due to the coronavirus situation and adhering restrictions, the case company operated with a home office policy, and NTNU encouraged students and employees to use digital platforms for meetings when possible. Thus, there was not practically possible to carry out the interviews face to face, which is often recommended for creating the right atmosphere between the interviewer and the informant (Tjora 2021). All interviews were carried out through the platform Teams, which is the platform the case company use for online meetings. Tjora (2021) stresses the importance of facilitating for a comfortable and relaxed situation for the informants through carrying out the interview at a place where the informant feel safe. Although limited to digital platforms, there is an ocean to pick from when it comes to choosing platform. However, it was most appropriate to stick with the platform that the informants were used to using, so that they would not have to become familiar with a possibly new digital platform to participate in the interview.

As mentioned, meeting up face to face for an interview is recommended. When carrying out I experienced that the interview situation took a more formal and strict form, where little time was spent on the opening questions and idle talk and we mostly stayed to the scheduled questions. Less room for creating a relaxed atmosphere for the interview where digressions and idle talk feels welcome, may possibly have worked as a barrier to open reflection where the informant can feel comfortable to take their time to think and reflect. On the other side, when meeting on a digital platform the sound recorder is not visible for the informants, which may have contributed to the informant being more relaxed as they were not reminded of the interview being recorded.

6.2.2 Intervention

Empirical data was also collected through carrying out an intervention in the case organization. The intervention was a workshop where collective reflection around eight reflective questions was chosen as method. The planning and execution of the intervention is described in chapter 8 and chapter 9.

6.3 Analysing the Empirical Data

Throughout the research process, two sets of empirical data were generated. One set of data included transcriptions of and notes from the interviews carried out. The other set included field notes from the intervention session taken during the session and immediately after.

The empirical data was analysed in two rounds. The interviews were carried out and analysed partly before carrying out the intervention to get familiar with the case organization. However, the analysis was not fully completed until after the intervention stage. In analysing the interviews, I started with getting familiar with the data by reading through them and making notes in the page margin. In the margin I noted and highlighted themes that I found interesting, as well as highlighting interesting quotations. I looked for themes that come up repeatedly. However, I soon noticed that the participants presented different perspectives and ideas of the topic. Therefore, I also focused on maintaining the breadth of perspectives in the data set and looked for different representations in the empirical data. The material was then categorized by establishing codes. The coding was done manually, and the different themes are presented throughout the presentation of the empirical data. In the analysis of the data, I have presented quotations to highlight central points.

In analysing the field notes from the intervention stage, I focused on analysing how the empirical data answered the questions for reflection. Again, I looked for viewpoints that came up repeatedly, but I was also focused on looking for how different participants presented different perspectives, as well as analysing how they built on each other. I started by getting familiar with the field notes by reading through them and taking notes in the margin. The notes highlighted different perspectives being presented, but also important, I noted myself where the participants had built upon each other by marking parts of the text with symbols that I assigned to central elements and viewpoints given. In the analysis I did not establish codes but maintained the reflective questions to categorize and present the data. Moreover, I used the different themes presented in the case description as a starting point for analysis.

6.4 Positioning

Within the intellectual traditions of both action research, critical systems thinking and feminist theory, there is a long tradition of scholars to position themselves within the research process. In her exploration of how feminisms have informed and grounded action research, Patricia Maguire highlights that "feminist scholars often disclose their biases, feelings, choices and multiple identities, clearly locating themselves within the research process, through 'a refusal to remain anonymous'" (Maguire 2001, p. 65). In general, it lies in the nature of action research to be transformative and contribute to some type of social change. This represents a clear break with conventional research traditions that seeks to position themselves outside the research process, influencing as little as possible.

Myself, I've always sought for anonymity, to blend in without attracting any attention. However, born with a visible disability, anonymity has never seemed to be an option. In some way, I feel I had to learn anew how to handle this desire for anonymity. I don't know if I would call it a 'refusal to remain anonymous', but rather accepting that anonymity is impossible also in this situation.

Therefore, working with these epistemologies has been both liberating and constraining. Liberating because I've been introduced to new perspectives on what is a legitimate knowledge producer and legitimate source to knowledge, as well as social sciences with a strong commitment to democracy and social justice. Constraining because, despite the acknowledgement of all positions as marked and capable of producing only partial knowledge, as well as a neglection of the unembodied scientist, I've been struggling to comprehend how I can manage to "see" things clear and carry out a research related to a topic that has provoked strong feelings within me. Especially, since I to a large extent was unaware (and unprepared) of these feelings before I started this project. I've been struggling to trust my own perspectives as legitimate, fearing that my own marked position hinders me from gaining a perception of the world that resonates with how the world truly is. Anna Carastathis expressed this doubt of her experience when working with her dissertation on intersectionality, where I recognized myself in her words. She wrote: "I would learn to distrust the most 'innocent' of encounters, which I found myself constantly plumbing for undercurrents and blatant statements of racism, homophobia, misogyny" (Carastathis 2016, p. xi).

Throughout the research process this doubt appeared in different stages. One of my first encounters with it was during the interviews. I never informed my informants about my disability.

Meeting online, there was never a right moment to bring it up, and I feared it could be awkward and irrelevant to mention it. When I meet people in person it is impossible for it to go undetected. Thus, forced to meet online had a strange effect of concealing my disability, offering only the possibility to show a body from shoulder-height. None of my questions asked specifically about disability, but diversity being the topic I knew it could come up, and it did. Especially one moment stood out, when one of the informants came to talk about their office building being universally accessible, in which they used the expression "being stuck in the wheelchair". Although it was said in a positive context, explaining that the office buildings are universally accessible ready to welcome physically disabled employees, I couldn't help but react to the expression being used. I've never really used a wheelchair myself, except from a couple of days a few times after having a surgery, so I didn't feel directly struck, but it represents an expression of *ableism* (Campbell 2008). It gave associations to the expression "wheelchair bound". However common and normalized the expression is, there lies something degrading and deplorable in expressing a wheelchair as something you're "stuck in".

I immediately felt that I overacted to the expression being used, but I couldn't refuse to be disturbed. I felt like I didn't know how to react to it, and listening to the recordings I could hear myself bringing the conversation on to a new topic. I listened to the recordings several times to judge if I had misunderstood the situation, had I heard it wrong? To use the words of Carastathis (2016) I asked myself if I was being too sensitive, if *I* was now the one "constantly plumbing for undercurrents and blatant statements". I asked myself if I could possibly be a legitimate knowledge producer when situations, that I meet in everyday life and now also in interviews, provoked such strong feelings within me.

6.5 Quality of the Research

In assessing the quality of the research, I will use Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of *trustworthiness* as a starting point for evaluation. Trustworthiness consists of four criteria: *credibility, transferability, dependability,* and *confirmability.* Their criteria of assessing the quality of a qualitative study reject the notion of universal truths about the social world (Bryman 2016), in line with the ontological assumptions of critical systems thinking and action research. However, as this research takes in elements of action research, I will also attend to Greenwood and Levin's (2007) principles for establishing credibility and validity in AR inquiry. Lincoln and Guba's four criteria will be used a frame in shaping the assessment. However, I will discuss the criteria against

Greenwood and Levin's ideas. I will also give an account for how I consider the quality of my own research.

Credibility

Credibility attends to the "truth" of the findings and seeks to evaluate the extent to which the findings present the social reality it seeks to describe in a way that is consistent with how things really are and really work (Lincoln and Guba 1985). An approach to assessing the credibility of action research studies is attending to the "workability" of the solutions arrived at (Greenwood and Levin 2007). In judging findings in terms of its workability lies evaluating whether a solution can be said to be a solution to the initial problem situation identified. Evaluating the workability is described as "a matter of collective social judgement by knowledgeable participants about the outcomes of a collective social action" (Greenwood and Levin 2007, p. 64). In other words, evaluating the outcomes of the intervention strategy carried out in this research, should not be carried out solely by me as a researcher, but should be done by involving the participants in a collective process where the purpose is to evaluate and reflect upon how the intervention worked out for the organization. The time frame for this project has complicated for this process to take place, as evaluation should be carried out some time after carrying out the intervention, to allow for change to emerge. Therefore, assessing the workability of the research needs to be done at a later stage, and I must attend to other techniques to assess the credibility for now.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommend triangulation as a technique to ensure credibility of the findings. Triangulation involves using more than one method or source of data in the studying of social phenomena (Bryman 2016). My data collection has consisted of both semi-structured interviews and carrying out an intervention with participants from the case organization. Using multiple methods in collecting data has enabled for a thorough and rich understanding. Another technique suggested by Guba and Lincoln is peer debriefing, which involves "exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 308). The meetings with my supervisors have provided me with a context for peer debriefing in which I could discuss and test my analyses, as well as uncover how my taken-for-granted assumptions and biases may have influenced my analysis.

Transferability

Transferability attends to the applicability of the findings in other contexts or the same context at some other time (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Lincoln and Guba put emphasise on the uniqueness and significance of the specific context in which the findings hold for and argue that the transferability depends on the similarities between the context in which findings are generated and the context in which one wish to apply the findings to. Also, Greenwood and Levin (2007) argue that transferability is contextually and historically dependent. They suggest that to judge the transferability, an understanding of the contextual factors in the situation in which inquiry took place is needed to provide for a critical assessment of whether it makes sense to apply the knowledge to the new context. To provide for the opportunity to make a reasonable judgement of the transferability to other contexts, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest to make what they call thick descriptions of the context in which the study is carried out. A thick description involves giving detailed descriptions and interpretations of the context. To give sufficient information about the specific context in which I have carried out my research, I have provided a detailed case description which describes both the specific organization and its environmental context. Also, in presenting the empirical data, I have sought to give rich descriptions of my interpretations, as well presenting the understandings of the informants through the use of verbatim quotations.

Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability refers to the extent in which findings are consistent and could be repeated. They suggest adopting an 'auditing' approach to establish dependability. This means to keep records of every step of the research process – problem formulation, participant selection, field notes, transcriptions of interviews, and decisions concerning data analysis (Bryman 2016). These records should be easy to access for peers being able to act as auditors. Peers have not audited my research process. However, I have strived for documenting the stages of the research process through describing the design of the interview guide and intervention strategy, clarifying choices and considerations made in selecting participants, and choices made in analysing the data. I have also kept transcriptions of the interviews and field notes from the intervention session.

Confirmability

Confirmability is concerned with assessing the extent to which the research findings are reflecting the narratives presented by the participants, rather than being shaped by the values and biases of the researcher (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Lincoln and Guba suggest that the researcher should

strive to maintain some sort of neutrality, however, acknowledging that complete objectivity is impossible. I understand this criterion to some extent to break with the tradition of action research, critical systems thinking and feminist theory, that this thesis is anchored in. All three traditions serve to create some kind of social transformation and are concerned with emancipatory values. For example, McNiff and Whitehead (2002) suggest that ideas of truth, social justice, compassionate ways of living and respect for diversity are values often present in the contexts of action research. A concern with emancipation is seen as a defining characteristic of critical systems thinking (Jackson 2010). Flood and Romm (1996) suggest that ends of critical systems thinking are forms of fairer practice. In other words, research within these traditions is clearly value ladened. This is not suggesting that the researcher should impose their values onto the research participants, but rather acknowledging that researcher values and background play a role in all knowledge generation. Instead of seeking to keep off values, feelings, and biases, disclosing them gives them a natural place in the research process.

Throughout the research process I have aimed at presenting the reality the way its perceived by the research participants. However, acknowledging that "there will always be contamination of findings precisely because of the unavoidable involvement of the human psyche" (Bohm 2004, cited in McIntosh 2010, p. 86), I have found it important to reflect upon and describe the basis of my interpretations in analysing and presenting the findings. I have done this, between another, by clearly positioning myself in the research process in the previous subchapter.

7 Case Description - Stage 1: Explore the Problem Situation

In this chapter I describe the context that the research has been carried out within. I start by presenting the context in which the case company exist by describing how the general situation of equality and diversity is in the country that the company operates within and recent developments. Then I describe the case company, and the description is based on the empirical data from the interviews.

7.1 Context

The Nordic countries are often highlighted as pioneering countries in terms of gender equality concluded from consistently being "highly ranked on all international equality indexes" (Holst, Skjeie, Teigen 2019, p. 9). This is also highlighted by OECD, where one for instance can read that the Nordic countries "actively promote gender equality at home, at work, and in public life" (OECD 2018). The Nordic countries scores higher on many measures of gender equality when compared to other OECD and EU countries. However, inequality and discrimination persist. For example, gender segregation in the labour market is still high (Teigen and Skjeie 2017), minority women meet several barriers in entering the labour market (Umblijs 2020) and there are few women in the top management positions in Norway's biggest companies (Halrynjo and Stoltenberg 2017). A recent study found that informing about a disability in the job application reduced the probability of being invited to an interview by 48 % (Bjørnshagen and Ugreinov 2021).

A development within how businesses and organization relate to equality and diversity is the entering of the company EqualityCheck. EqualityCheck is a platform company where employees can review their employer on indicators that aims to create transparency about diversity and equality at the workplace (EqualityCheck n.d). The entrepreneurs behind the company have also engaged in the public discourse about diversity and equality, where their message is that diversity and equality is beneficial to the company (Sunde and Ringnes 2019). Also, consultant companies, like McKinsey and Company and Ernst and Young, are bringing this message (Banvik 2021; Rydne 2019). While, McKinsey and Company repeatedly publishes reports on why diversity matters, Ernst and Young have introduced the SHE index, ranking several Norwegian companies on how they perform on indicators related to diversity and equality.

A recent development in the Norwegian equality policy, which has come as a result of influence from the EU's polices, is to not isolate gender equality, but see gender in relationship with other sources of discrimination (Holst et al. 2019). Holst et al. (2019) suggest that there has been a shift in how to understands how inequality and discrimination is constructed – a shift from understanding discrimination in terms of single dimensions to looking at the interrelationship between multiple sources of discrimination. In other words, an intersectional understanding has gained foothold. This is also can also be observed when looking at the new activity duty for Norwegian employers.

New legal requirements

The activity duty and the duty to issue a statement is a new legal requirement for employers, taking effect from the year of 2020 as a part of the Norwegian Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act. The legal requirement is, as the name indicates, twofold. According to Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombudet, the employer activity duty means that "all Norwegian employers are obliged to work actively, targeted and systematically to promote equality and prevent discrimination in the workplace." (LDO n.d.). Moreover, they point to the duty as being an important preventive action, as well as highlighting that individual cases of discrimination seldom lead to structural changes in the practice of a workplace. The employer activity duty specifies that the work must be done in collaboration with employee representatives.

The grounds of discrimination that are included in the employer activity duty is:

- Gender

- Disability

- Sexual orientation

- Gender identity, gender expression

- Religion, belief

- Ethnicity

- Age

- Pregnancy

- Leave in connection with childbirth or adoption, care responsibilities

Moreover, intersectional discrimination having base in several grounds of discrimination working together at the same time, is included in the law.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act section 26 presents a four-step working method, that describes which employers the employer activity duty applies to, as well specifying which areas they need to report on. It states the following:

> All public undertakings, regardless of size, and private companies with more than 50 persons shall, the context of their operation:
>
> a) Investigate whether there is a risk of discrimination or other barriers to equality, including by reviewing pay conditions by reference to gender and the use of involuntary part-time every two years,
>
> b) analyze the causes of identified risks
>
> c) implement measures suited to counteract discrimination and promote greater equality and diversity in the undertaking, and
>
> d) evaluate the results of efforts made pursuant to a) to c).

The duty of employers to issue a statement is described in section 26 a), and states that "employers with obligation pursuant to section 26, second paragraph, shall issue a statement on the actual status of gender equality in the undertaking and what the undertaking is doing to comply with the activity duty pursuant to section 26".

7.2 Case company

The context in which this study is conducted is a Norwegian power company with about 270 employees. The past year, the company has initiated a sustainability project, where part of the project is to work with UN Sustainability Goal 5, Gender equality, and develop a strategy on how to work with diversity within the organization. The company has earlier focused on increasing the share of women in the top management team, with the result of now having a management team where women hold 50 % of the management team positions. In the overall organization, diversity and equality has been a matter in recruitment processes. However being on the agenda in the organization, there is a wish to take a step further and work more systemically with the matter within the organization. In this chapter I describe the particular company and its context, how they have related to the topic of study so far and their motivation for further work.

7.2.1 Introducing the Company

Core activity and company history

The core activity of the enterprise is energy production and energy related services. Historically, the enterprise has had a low share of women within the organization. The low share of women in the workforce relates to few women with education within electric power and electronic systems. As of January 2021, the share of women in the total organization is 29 %. However, there are big differences within the organization depending on department, location, and organizational level. The company has not collected distributed data that states the differences within the organization. However, they point to HR as a department that raises the total share of women, while for instance wind turbine technicians and power plant operators still predominantly, with a few exceptions, are men.

The company has a history that stretches over a period of hundred years. Although the company wasn't founded until 1950, they see the period starting from 1919, when the initial plans for hydropower plants within the county were launched, as an important part of the company history. The physical development of hydropower plants and power supply to the community is a proud part of both the company history and identity. They describe themselves as a pioneer when "hydro power plants were developed, and the first Norwegian wind farm was established". To contribute to the development of the local municipalities and secure power supply is their societal mandate, while at the same time realize the zero-emission society through developing the future energy systems. Today, the company is owned by the municipalities in which they operate and

an insurance company. It is organized as a company group with several subsidiaries. The company is practising value-based leadership and positive psychology, where the values "open", "brave" and "responsible" are "shaping the identity".

Previous actions

The company has not formally developed an overall strategic plan on how to work with diversity within the organization. However, two organizational processes were highlighted in the interviews, when asked how the organization has worked with the topic previously; increasing the share of women in the top management team and establishing goals related to share of women in recruitment processes. The previous focus has mainly been on gender equality.

In 2012, the company appointed their present CEO. At that time only one of the top management team positions were held by a woman. One of the informants points to that the graduate trainee program challenged their CEO on the absence of carrier opportunities for women in the company. This made increasing the share of women in his management team a focus area – he wanted to show that there exist opportunities for young women starting their career in the company. Since then, the share of women in the top management team has increased from one woman in the management team to women holding 50 % of the management team positions. The CEO points to shifting from internal recruitment to external recruitment in the hiring process as an important means to the end of increasing the share of women. While candidates to the top management team was typically recruited from within the organization, looking outside were chosen as a strategy to increase the share of women, he explains:

> We have been in an industry where people often have built and worked their whole carrier. (...) The normal way to the top was to climb the carrier ladder within the company. (...) I choose to look outside to find female candidates. So, I had to think a little different than sticking with internal recruitment as there is still few women.
>
> -CEO

His motivation for working towards this end lied in creating an attractive workplace and modern organization with career opportunities regardless of gender, as well as a belief that it gives the company a competitive advantage.

> "From my point of view, it is a competitive advantage to have a diverse management team, and I experience that we are perceived as a more proactive and modern organization because we have women in the management team."
>
> -CEO

The recent years, the company have experienced growth in the organization and during a period of about one year, in 2018, the company hired about 50 new employees. Ahead of this recruitment process, the management team established a goal of recruiting at least 40 % women. In order to achieve this end, the Human Resource Department developed a certain set of means:

- Adjustments were made in the advertising. To appeal to the desired target group the job advert text was written with the goal in mind and tested on women to evaluate the appeal.
- New advertising channels were explored, and they asked themselves through which mediums can they reach women.
- Pictures were chosen strategically such that both men and women were represented in all positions. They used their own employees as models. However, in cases where no women in the company held a particular position, female employees were represented in occupations they didn't hold.
- The organization strived for having at least 40 % women amongst the candidates summoned for interview

The campaign resulted in a share of 34 % women recruited. Although not reaching the targeted share, they express that they are, in overall, contented with the outcome. As well as contributing to increasing the share of women in the organization, there exist a perception that the campaign in itself was enlightening and "contributed to more than the goal [40 % women]", as an organizational developer expressed it. She adds that the campaign made them "do some changes that we have lived by afterwards".

Other things that are mentioned, but not necessarily highlighted as a part of organizational processes that have aimed at reducing inequality, is that the office building is designed for universal accessibility and that the company previously has had employees through NAV work training. The company has also recently signed up for the consulting company Ernst and Young's SHE Index – "a catalyst for encouraging stakeholders to focus on diversity and inclusion in leadership and workforce, equal compensation and work life balance" (SHE Index n.d.).

Employee involvement

The company have to a certain extent practiced employee involvement in their work related to equality and diversity. Two arenas for employee involvement have been identified. One of these arenas is employee involvement practiced through the role of the union representatives within the organization. A union representative explains that questions regarding equality and diversity has been discussed in the forums where the union representatives are represented, specifically the Board and Samarbeidsutvalget. These forums have been an arena for discussion and reflection regarding on-going questions related to equality and diversity, exemplified with the #metoo-campaign.

> For example, "Ok, #metoo is happening, does that mean something for us?" Then, we took a look on how we handle notification of that sort, but also concerning how that sort of things, how the way one rig oneself can function oppressive or negatively. Negative sexual attention towards people, especially women.
>
> - union representative

The above quote shows an example of how union representatives have been involved in discussion of contemporary issues related to equality and diversity, because the issue was on the agenda in forums where they are represented. Union representatives has also been involved as a resource in organizational processes. An example of this is that the three union representatives from the biggest labour unions have been asked specifically by the management team "to come up with female candidates that can contribute to a better composition of the board", as a union representative explains.

Another arena for employee involvement is the sustainability project, where a workshop with graduate trainees and new employees has been organized. The purpose of the workshop was to prioritize and decide on which of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) are relevant for the company. An equivalent, but separate workshop was organized for the management team. One of the UN SDGs that was put forward as relevant for the company was SDG 5 – Gender equality. In an organizational audit it is specified that the work related to the sustainability project aims at broad involvement in start-up and closure.

7.2.2 Motivational factors

While the previous paragraphs looked into how the company has related to the topic of diversity and equality so far, I will next identify different motivational factors for why the company is engaged in this topic.

Market shift as a perceived driver for increasing diversity in the organization

The industry that the company operates in is described as a traditional industry wherein the workforce has been dominated by men since its inception. A low turnover in the workforce and a low growth in the market, hence few new appointments, as well as internal recruitment to leader positions are viewed as barriers to have a diverse workforce and a diverse management team. However, lately, the industry has experienced shifts in the market and new growth resulting from a shift towards renewable energy. The CEO describes the relationship between shifts in the market and the need for innovation and a diverse workforce the following way:

> If we are to shift from the traditional power industry to a renewable industry, we must adjust. (...) There is wind, there is sun, there is electrification, there is digitalization, all these factors force us to become a more innovative company. Force us to go from a traditional company to an innovative company. (...) Now, we are recruiting both female and male engineers, and if we want to be attractive to young graduates, we can't be the traditional company we once were. So, this is simply a necessity to respond to what happens.
>
> -CEO

In other words, responding to the shift from a traditional energy industry towards a renewable energy industry is seen in conjunction with a need for being an attractive workplace. The narrative presented is twofold: shifts in the market create a need for innovation and renewal of the company, and a diverse workforce makes the company better prepared for adapting to the market. However, having a diverse workforce is viewed as making the employer a more attractive workplace and a necessity to attract the candidates needed. This is also linked to benefits for the company in terms of increased profit.

> One way it can impact the profitability directly is that if you have diversity and is a more attractive workplace for 50 % of the pool, there is a higher probability that you have candidates. We haven't been a very attractive industry, but I believe that we now are a company that they [graduates] want to work for. Also, the best students might likely be women and if they rule out working for us because we are too traditional, we are losing many good candidates.
>
> -CEO

> It [working with equality and diversity] is also important to, in a long-time perspective, be able to attract the right talents.
>
> <div align="right">-CEO of subsidiary</div>

Summing up, diversity is presented as a tool to achieve organizational goals in terms of innovation and achieving success in a new market, as well as a means to create an attractive workplace. In other words, diversity within the organization is not presented as an end in itself, but as a means to reach business goals.

A perception that a diverse workforce is better equipped to make good decisions and being innovative

Among the motivational factors, there is a perception that a diverse workforce is better equipped to make good decisions. The perception that decisions are better, relates to that representation are enabling more perspectives, viewpoints, and competences to be considered in a decision-making situation, with the consequence of having better grounds for making decisions. This standpoint assumes that people, based on their background and belonging to different identities, are in possession of inherently different attributes, preferences, and worldviews. Then, when diversity is represented in the organization, the organization are in a position where they can derive benefit from diversity in the sense that it enables better decisions. An organizational developer within the organizations explains the relationship between diversity and decision-making this way:

> Our CEO makes it clear that he believes that the decisions we make become better. When both genders are represented, we have better grounds for decision-making. More perspectives are considered. I believe he is right. And when we think of diversity as more than just gender, for instance age, when we mix the competence of young and older employees, they bring different aspects to the table. A young employee might have good digital knowledge, while an older might have good knowledge within the industry. Then, as a whole, it can be better than if only one or the other was represented. So, I believe decisions become more relevant.
>
> <div align="right">-organizational developer</div>

Diversity and decision-making are also linked to better results for the company, in the sense that a diverse workforce better reflects the market in which the company operates, and therefore

better can respond to market needs and wants. A CEO of a subsidiary within the company group puts his argument like this:

> Primarily, better results. I mean, better decisions that lead to better results. (...) We live in a society that is... and we must relate to end users that are diversified, if you can put it like that. It's not a homogenous mass. So, if we can't reflect the needs and wants that exist in the society, we make ourselves irrelevant.
>
> -CEO of subsidiary

The latter argument can be seen in conjunction with the market shift that the company experience. The subsidiary is a direct result of a business strategy of entering markets on the downstream of the original business model, not being as sensitive to the electricity price. De Wit (2017) defines downstream markets as markets closer to the end users. Operating in markets closer to the end-users, may therefore be seen as a driver for increased diversity within the organization, following the argument that if the company can't reflect the market, they make themselves irrelevant.

The linking between diversity and decision-making also present diversity as a tool to achieve organizational goals. Diversity is understood as representation of different backgrounds and types of people. However, representation is not a goal in itself, but a means to have better grounds for decisions, enabling the company to make more relevant decisions. Again, the ultimate goal is the company's performance on

A better working environment and a good place to work for everyone

Diversity within the workforce is also linked to the work environment within the organization. The notion of how diversity relates to the work environment is mainly twofold. There exists a perception that diversity within the organization contributes to a better working environment. Also, diversity and work environment are connected in the sense that a good work environment is open to and tolerant to diversity and there exist a desire to be a good place to work for everyone. The CEO of a subsidiary explains his idea of how diversity and the working environment is related the following way:

> It [an organization's motivation to work with diversity] is also a better environment. It isn't necessarily a good recipe for having a good working environment that everyone is alike. (...) I believe that there should be room for all, given that you are open and comes forward and wish to

be a part of the community. It's like, one shall not, and it's not okay to throw remarks or joke about someone's sexual orientation or religion, for instance. That is not the type of environment that constitute a good working environment.

<div align="right">-CEO of subsidiary</div>

His understanding emphasises both the notion that diversity can contribute to a better work environment and the notion that a good work environment is tolerant to diversity. However, in the quote, tolerance to diversity is conditioned by pointing to desired values, attitudes, and behaviours. Implicitly, one can read that there is room for different backgrounds and identities, but there exist expectations to organizational members in terms of their values and appearance, shrinking the actual room for diversity to a room with clear frames for what is valued. Moreover, the quote presents an understanding of equality and diversity in terms of absence of discrimination and a right not to be discriminated against, exemplified with a reference to inappropriate jokes. This link between diversity and absence of discrimination may suggest that a work environment tolerant to diversity is understood as a means of achieving justice.

Also, other informants link diversity to a good working environment. In the following quote diversity is presented as contributing to a better working environment in itself, and diversity is presented as a necessity to stimulate a good work environment.

> I'm thinking that it [the motivation behind initiating measures promoting equality and diversity] is, well, to create a good working environment, I believe in diversity. If you have only one stereotype, you won't stimulate a good working environment, as the working environment is shaped by those working with us.

<div align="right">-HR leader</div>

Moreover, diversity is linked to work environment by highlighting that the employer should take care of their employees through the different stages of life through their HR policies. Through the term life phase politics ("livsfasepolitikk") diversity is presented as taking care of care of the employees throughout different stages of life.

> You could say that, in a diversity perspective, we see the value of having everyone on the team. (...) That the focus is to preserve the employees because wish to have the diversity.

<div align="right">-HR leader</div>

In a way there is a little life phase politics in it as well. Because taking care of people even when they are ill or have special needs, is also about diversity for me. In *company* there should be room for having small children, there should be room to have ill parents, there should be room to be ill yourself, and that we facilitate such that everyone can be well.

-organizational developer

International growth and challenges related to working language

A recent development in the organization is a development in how they relate to language upon employment. While the organization previously operated with an exclusive requirement that all employees must be fluent in Norwegian, there are now employees with English as their main language at work. A representative from the management team highlights this as a notable development related to diversity within the organization:

A notable development is, if you look at how the company was five years ago, you couldn't work in the company if you didn't speak Norwegian. That is possible now. (...) It probably does not apply to the whole organization, and it probably does not apply at all levels, but I think it is a notable development overall. It wasn't like that five years ago. Back then, you couldn't have worked in the company without speaking Norwegian as no one worked in English.

-representative from the management team

One department in particular is highlighted when it comes to this development in attitudes towards working language. This is the artificial intelligence (AI) department, where there are several employees having English as their main language at work, resulting in English being the working language for the total department. A union representative for one of the labor unions explains that they have held their General Assembly in English the past two years, due to 2-3 members having English as their main language. This development has started a discussion within the organization regarding working language, and is also pointed to as a challenge that comes with having a more diverse workforce than before.

Diversity is good, but it can be challenging to integrate it, like, should we demand that they learn Norwegian? Is it Norwegian or English that is the working language in the organization? Can we say that 250 employees must speak English because 10 employees have English as their main language at work? It is a thing we are constantly challenged on and have to consider along the way, but there has never been talking of stop doing it.

-organizational developer

The development in the attitudes towards working language is linked to growth in the company and entering new markets. While their traditional market of hydropower is dominated by Scandinavian actors, shifting to wind power production as part of their energy mix has contributed to a more international focus where European suppliers are more important.

> It [English being more important as a working language] is to a certain extent also driven by company growth and our company growth is happening in English.
>
> -representative from the management team

> Within hydropower there is dominantly Norwegian [suppliers], some Scandinavian, but within wind power you find European suppliers. Contract negotiations have been in English. There has also been foreign capital – banks. So, the working language has been English.
>
> -business developer and union representative

Through the last quotations it become evident that a more international focus through entering new markets pose both opportunities and challenges for the company in terms of hiring employees having English as their main language at work.

New legal requirements – the employer activity duty and duty to issue a statement

The employer activity duty wasn't specifically mentioned by any of the informants when asked why an organization would choose to work with diversity and equality, but as an employer with more than 50 employees, the employer activity duty is a legal requirement that the company must comply to. One of the informants pointed to that the employer activity duty had raised their awareness and put it on the agenda, when asked specifically about it.

> Once there is a requirement, we need to get familiar with what it involves. So, it raised our awareness in HR when we got to know about the requirement. Probably, it made us aware to include it [diversity and equality] in our sustainability program, and it is also the background for taking part in this master project. Because it is something that we need to do better.
>
> -organizational developer

The activity duty is presented as a mechanism that have contributed to putting equality and diversity on the agenda. From the quote, one can read that it has made them more aware of areas

where there so far has been a lack of effort and initiative – in which areas they experience that the need to improve.

I will now briefly summarize what came forward throughout the interviews. The company have put gender equality on the agenda, through engaging in increasing the number of women in the management team, as well as setting goals in their recruitment processes with an aim that women should equal 40 % of the new recruitments to the company. Different measures were initiated in both the organizational processes and the company has succeeded in both increasing the share of women in the management team and increasing the share of women recruited to the company. Overall, they are content with the results achieved in these processes. However, in the overall organization, the share of women is still low. Especially the occupations that traditionally has been male dominated have few women. While gender equality has been put on the agenda, the company has not attended to work with other types of inequalities, like disability and ethnic minorities, through initiating organizational processes. However, they wish to put it on the agenda and new legal requirements demands for it.

It is noticeable that several external forces influence the company. The measures initiated in the company is grounded in creating an attractive and modern workplace, and to work with equality is perceived as a necessity to be able to attract new employees and succeed in the markets they operate within. Moreover, there is a belief that the company will performer better, which also in a narrative presented in the public discourse about diversity and equality in the working life. These factors are also motivational factors for bringing their work with diversity and equality forward.

8 Stage 2: Produce an Intervention Strategy

After exploring the problem situation, the next step in Jackson's (2020) EPIC-framework is to produce an intervention strategy. This chapter describes the considerations made in producing the intervention strategy.

8.1 Deciding upon an Appropriate Intervention Strategy

The context description explored different motivational factors for initiating measures aiming to remedy issues related to equality and diversity, in which it also surfaced different perspectives and understandings of equality and diversity. The research question of this thesis seeks to develop a (system) methodology that relate to practice within diversity management with an aim of challenging inequality and enact change. McIntosh (2010) argues that reflective practice can be used as a tool to support and develop practice. Thus, it is reasonable to ask how reflection and reflective practice can be used as a tool to gain new insights about how to work with questions regarding equality and diversity within organizations. Opposed to positivist approaches like management standards and quantitative tools, that have gained position as the mainstreamed approaches to diversity management the latest years, the chosen methodology for intervention centres reflection and appreciation of different points of views. The goal of the intervention is to create dialogue for new actions to be taken, and throughout this dialogue provide an understanding of the problem situation through collective reflection, as well as produce learning for the participants involved. In other words, the intervention aims to surface the different perspectives existing and put them into dialogue with it each other, as well as studying how meaning is constructed throughout the process.

Reflective practice can be divided into three terms 'reflection-on-action', 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-about-action' (Leitch & Day 2000). It was Schön (1983) that originally popularised the idea of reflective practice. According to Schön professionals engage in two forms of reflective thinking – reflection on action and reflection in action. While reflection *on* action involves looking back at events and do a retrospective analysis after action has been taken, reflection *in* action involves reflecting while you're doing something, reframing the problem and making adjustments as you go. Reflection *about* action is an extension of Schön's categories and considers structural conditions of social, economic, and political processes in which action takes place (Zeichner 1993).

McIntosh (2010) explores the relationship between reflection and action research. He suggests that action research is a "*critically reflexive* approach to research in which claims of validity to knowledge within a particular domain can be examined and contested, which in this process help to generate new ways of thinking, seeing and acting" (p. 33). In other words, as the process pass by, the participants involved have not only contributed to new knowledge claims within a specific domain, but, through engaging in the process, developed its reflective capacities and worldviews. He further stresses the issue of measuring the quality of a research process, suggesting that the quality depends on the eye judging – "what is quality to one may not be quality to another" (p. 33). In response to this, he suggests that it lies in the nature of action research to "explore concepts of quality and value, but that they are uncovered democratically in the exploration, not imposed as preordained constructs" (p. 33). This opens for means and ends to constantly being negotiated throughout the process. McNiff (2002) call attention to the importance of creating an environment where difference and tolerance can be negotiated through appreciating different points of view.

Elliot (1991) put the relationship between reflective practice and action research this way: "what Schön have called *reflective practice* (...) [I] have termed *action research*" (p. 50). He suggests that the fundamental goal of action research is to improve practice, and that production of new knowledge is subordinate and conditioned by this fundamental aim. He views improving practice as "realizing those values which constitute its ends" (p. 49). He further suggests that "values are infinitely open to reinterpretation through reflective practice; they cannot be defined in terms of fixed and unchanging benchmarks against to measure improvement in practice" (p. 50). This suggest that values are constantly being constructed and restructured throughout the reflection process. Thus, also ends are transformed in the continuous reconstruction of values. The process itself transforms the outcome of the process. In response to this, he argues that ends defined by values cannot be viewed as "concrete objectives or targets which can be perfectly realized at some future point in time" (p. 51). That would make them technical ends that can be specified prior to action, and reflection would in this case involve technical reasoning about how to achieve the prespecified ends. Looking at ends as constantly being interpreted in a reflective process, makes ends defined in practice, not prior to it. With this understanding of improving practice, lies an acknowledgement that one will not solve a problem such that it disappears forever. As the ends and values are reconfigured one will have to come up with new solutions and ways of working to develop practice.

McNiff (2002) presents ideas of truth, social justice, compassionate ways of living and respect for diversity as values often present in context of action research. However, she suggests that there often is a gap between the values prized in principle and the values acted upon in practice. She argues that, in reality, preference is often shown to privilege elites rather than those underprivileged and marginalised. Action research seeks to understand these issues in order to enact change such that present realties become more in tune with the values esteemed in principle.

Kemmis (2008) suggest that practice is collectively constructed through social processes and therefore must be understood "in terms of the collective understandings and collective effects of those involved and affected by the practice" (p. 5). In this, he suggests that it is not enough to understand solely the individual perspectives of the participants involved in an action research project, but that one should aim at a collective self-understanding through collective reflection. The collective reflective process aims at achieving intersubjective agreements, mutual understanding, and unforced consensus about what to do. Also, Greenwood and Levin (2007) argues for action research "create spaces for collective reflection" (p. 72), where new understandings of situations may be developed for new actions to be taken. They term this cogenerative learning.

8.2 Participant selection

Another aspect of planning an intervention is deciding on who to involve as participants. Action research emphasise broad participation and place a strong value on democracy and involvement in every step of the research process (Greenwood & Levin 2007), appreciating the different perspectives of those involved or affected (Kemmis 2008; McNiff and Whitehead 2002).

Based on this, we worked with two principles for participant selection. It was desirable to involve participants that have different perceptions of the system, hence contributing with different understandings of the problem situation. However, to maintain the democratic value of self-control it was let to the organization to make the final decision on who they wanted to involve.

It was also necessary to make several pragmatic considerations concerning participation and selection of participants. Local regulations on the number of people allowed to meet and distance requirements due to the coronavirus situation affected the participant selection process. At the

time of carrying out the intervention a maximum of 10 people were allowed to meet. This limited the size of the group from the organization to seven people.

Another consideration was physical distance between the organization's locations. We requested the organization to involve employees working in operations, being close to the core activity to secure participation from different positions in the organization. However, due to long distances and travel times only organization members working at the main office participated. It was desirable that all participants attended physically, not through online platforms, which was weighted stronger than involving participants from other locations.

The result was that corona restrictions, limiting the size, and physical distance, limiting organizational members available for participation, made the group somewhat unbalanced having a weight of participants from the management team and organization department. While most of the participants was involved in the intervention because they have been involved in the company's previous work related to equality and diversity, one employee was recruited through the platform Workplace where he volunteered to participate. The final group of participants included:

- CEO of the company
- Management team member responsible for the technology department
- Management team member responsible for the organization department
- Organization developer (organization department)
- HR-leader (organization department)
- Union representative
- Employee from operations

8.3 Reflective Questions

It emerges from the above presentation of the intervention strategy that the methodology of action research is to ask questions and reflect upon them. The questions are of a reflexive character aimed at exploring different perspectives, ideas, and experiences. McNiff and Whitehead (2002) suggest that the methodological questioning do not aim for reaching consensus, but for creating space of tolerance for differences to be negotiated. Remember also the point of creating space for collective reflection aimed at a collective self-understanding (Kemmis 2008) and for cogenerative learning to take place (Greenwood & Levin 2007).

When compiling the list of questions to be reflected upon in the workshop, we had in mind the goal of the intervention strategy – to facilitate a learning process through dialogue for new actions to be taken. Inspiration was found in action learner Reginald Revans' "Key Questions of Action Learning" (Revans 1982). He sets out six questions designed to engender debate about what to do and how to do it in initiating a change process. The first three questions seek to stimulate debate about what to do. The questions are:

What am I (or my firm) really trying to do?

What is stopping me (or my firm) from doing it?

What can I (or my firm) contrive to do about it?

The last three questions centre on how to implement change. In this, lies to come to grips with "who understands what is the challenge to be met, those who are strongly motivated to meet it, and those who have the resources for meeting it (...) – those who know, those how care and those who can" (Revans 1982, p. 68). Flood and Romm (1996) present the questions as contributing to raise debate about design and decision making. The questions are:

Who *knows* what the line of action is that we are trying to implement?

Who *cares* about getting this line of action implemented?

Who *can* actually contribute anything toward getting it implemented?

The questions designed by Revans was used as a starting point for working out which questions to reflect upon for the workshop. However, inspiration was also taken from Ulrich's (1994) concept of boundary questions asked in both the is-mode and ought-mode. As we only had two hours, it would be too time-consuming to ask the questions in two modes. However, we found it interesting use his concept of the ought-mode to raise debate about if and how the discussion so far has privileged the interest of some specific stakeholders. We therefore introduced two additional questions to our set of questions. This resulted in the following eight questions:

What-mode

What do we actually want to accomplish?

What is stopping us from accomplishing this?

What can we contrive to do about it? (What do we manage to do about it?)

How-mode

Who can we involve to get a widespread picture of the situation?

Who have an interest in implementing actions to promote equality and diversity?

In who's interest is it to implement actions to promote equality and diversity?

Who can actually contribute to implementing actions to promote equality and diversity?

Ought-mode

Whose premises/which considerations were taken into account in the assessment of what and how?

Whose premises/which considerations ought to be taken into account in the assessment of what and how?

In sum the eight questions seek to create dialogue about what is a desirable and feasible change, and if the understanding of feasible and desirable change is privileging the perspectives of some specific stakeholder(s). In this lie reflecting upon how the system can be seen from a variety of perspectives, as well as reflecting upon whose perspective is valued in the politics of knowledge – who do we listen to? As well as how location within power structures and interpersonal relations influence people's visioning of the system. In other words, the questions seek to reflect upon the boundary judgements made by each participant and in collective when answering the questions. This way, they seek to explore the reference system of different stakeholders, create dialogue between the stakeholders with the aim of developing a shared understanding of the problem situation, as well as reflecting upon the taken-for-granted assumptions underlying the shaping of a reference system.

8.4 Facilitation

The workshop was planned like this:

We were three representatives from NTNU, my supervisors and myself. My supervisor with within organizational development and action research was the one facilitating the workshop, while my supervisor within equality and diversity provided the participants with some background information through a short presentation. The session started with a short introduction that sought to give a backdrop for the sessions topic and stimulate for later reflection. It presented some relevant research and concentrated on briefly introduce two perspectives on equality and diversity – the perspective of social justice and the perspective of benefit. While the perspective

of social justice emphasise equality and diversity as to achieve equal opportunity and equal rights, the benefit discourse sees diversity and equality as means of achieving different benefits, like innovation, financial performance, increasing market share and attracting talents (Holvino and Kamp 2009). In the presentation, an illustration was also central in creating an image of what is the issue and how can we find solutions. Figure 6 illustrates what makes a "difference making a difference". While the difference in height is an issue in the first two illustrations, the difference in height no longer makes a difference in the third illustration. The illustration was presented to have the participants reflect upon which differences make a difference in our organization.
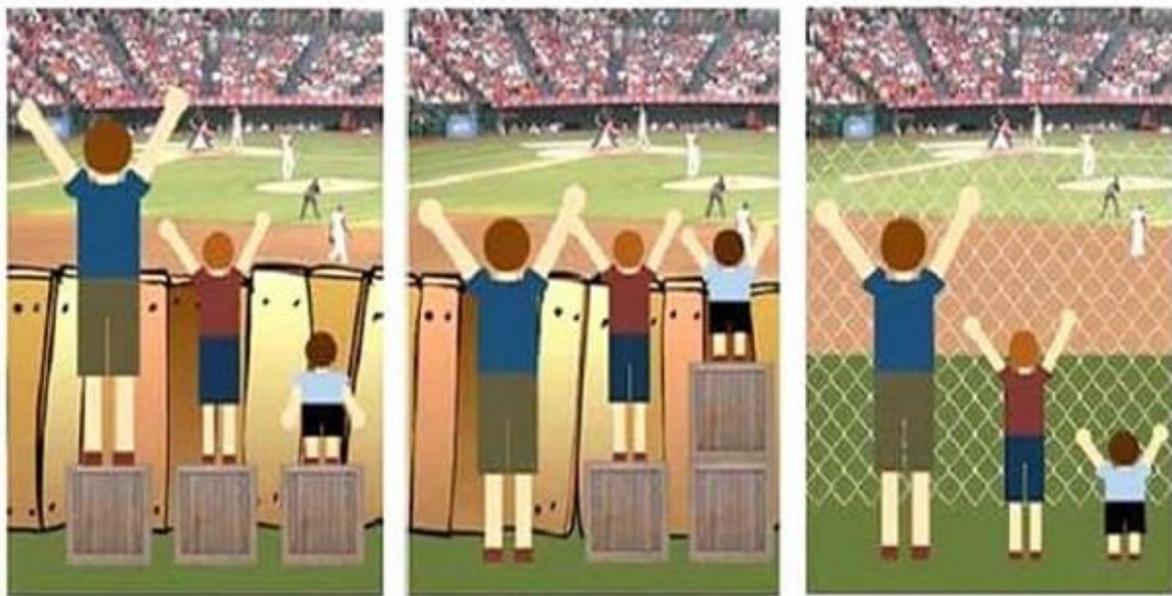

Figure 6: Difference making a difference. Adapted from Valbrun (2017).

After the short introduction, the reflective intervention session started, where the participants were to reflect upon the above questions. To facilitate the reflection and make sure everyone had an opportunity to speak up, the session was organized with a facilitator taking an active role, making sure the conversation was on topic and leading the word. For some of the questions we had planned for using a method for reflection called "fishbowl conversation (Arbeidsgiverportalen 2019). The method divides the group in two, where one half is placed in an inner circle facing into the circle, and the other half forms an outer circle. While the conversation takes place in the inner circle, the members of the outer circle are asked to be active listeners that observes, reflect upon the conversation, and takes notes. After a while, the participants switch places and continue the conversation. The method seeks to provide for the participants to pay attention to each other by listening and build upon each other's reflections.

9 Stage 3: Intervene

This chapter gives an assessment of the intervention stage. Findings from the case description will be used a starting point for analysis. However, the analysis will be focused on how new aspects of understanding come forward as a result of interaction. Two types of interaction take place in the facilitation of the workshop – that of the interplay between the participants from the case organization, and that of the interplay between researcher and participants. Both types of interaction inform the research process/the cogenerative learning process. While the analysis of interaction between participants centres on how participants build upon each other's reflections, the analysis of interaction between the researcher and participant focuses on how the researcher affect the process through facilitation. The assessment will be partly structured by the eight reflective questions for the workshop. As we chose not to do recordings from the workshop, the analysis is based on field notes written during the workshop and right after completion. Thus, empirical data will not be presented in the form of quotations, but through reproduction based on the filed notes. It is also worth mentioning that two of the participants ended up with participating through online platforms due to the coronavirus. I will not go into details and analyse how this affected the dynamic of the dialogue. However, it's worth mentioning as it made it necessary to do some adjustments in the planned schedule throughout the workshop.

9. 1 What-mode

"What do we actually want to accomplish?"
The first question asked was "What do we actually want to accomplish?". The conversation emerging from this question brought up perspectives that are familiar from the individual interviews and the case description. The conversation centred on that having a diverse workforce is desirable, which is a perception seemingly shared by the whole group. Perceptions that appeared in the conversation, that can also be recognized from the case description, are working with diversity as a means of accomplishing a variety of benefits: an attractive and modern workplace, attracting talents, facilitate for innovation and a better work environment, as well as being an organization that offers the same opportunities for everyone and being a good workplace for all. In this, one can recognize the two perspectives presented in the introduction to the session – the benefit discourses and the justice discourses.

One of the participants himself reflected upon how his own perspective on diversity is leaning towards the benefit discourse. In his reflection he made use of a term presented during the short introduction to the session. This yields a clear example of how understanding is created in the interaction between researcher and participants, and how we as researchers influence the process of reflection and cogenerative learning through taking an active role in the research process, by for example introducing concepts and ideas that the participants can come to use in constructing meaning throughout the research process. From an action research perspective, this effect is not seen as an undesirable side effect of the research design but is rather welcomed. Levin and Greenwood (2007) indeed argue that the action researcher should contribute to setting the local situation in comparison to a broader context by bringing analytical frameworks to the process – assisting "the local group in opening up its sense of the situation" (p. 120).

"What is stopping us from accomplishing it?"

In the conversation raised by the next reflective question, "What is stopping us from accomplishing it?", company growth was a matter for discussion. In the case description it emerged that low company growth was seen as a barrier to having a diverse workforce, and that having company growth is viewed a necessity for increased diversity in the workforce. It also emerged that company growth, as a result of entering new markets, is perceived as a driver for having a more diverse workforce, drawing on a conclusion that links diversity to innovation and success in new markets. These perceptions also appeared in the group conversation. While one participant presented low growth in the company over the last 40 years as a barrier, another participant built upon this by emphasising that the company now entering new markets represents an opportunity to increased diversity. She looks as this as an opportunity not only in the sense that they will need to recruit new people, but also that new industries will demand for new competencies, opening for *different* people to enter the company. While she is not sure if more diversity will come with a new generation of workers entering hydropower, a department she described as a homogenous group, she feels confident that increased diversity within the workforce will come with new industries, as a result of a need for recruiting from new fields.

However, in the interaction between the participants, this perspective on growth and new markets was challenged when a participant critically asked if they shouldn't work with questions related to equality and diversity if the company didn't experience growth or were to operate only within one industry. He suggested that if they operated within only hydropower or only wind power, they

would still have to "make it happen", and should still aim for working with diversity within the whole organization.

From this dialogue emerged another perception on what function as barriers, as well as support for the standpoint of working with diversity within the whole organization. A participant with a long a career in the company, with experience from a male-dominated environment, described himself as "born and raised within what was called 'old hydropower' (referring to the specific expression being used earlier in the conversation)". He explains that he believes that qualifications and traditional gender division of occupational groups is what function as barriers. However, he expressed his support for working with diversity within the whole organization, not overlooking the traditional business, by pointing to how he has experienced that there is a value in having women as colleagues. His experience is that women, having some qualities that men don't have, are better at some things that men are not good at. This way he believes that "we become better together". He summarized his standpoint by referring to a colleague – "We have far too few Noras".

Another aspect coming forward as a result of interaction between the participants, is the risk of talking ahead of each other. Several times during the session, the participants addressed that they look differently on what diversity and equality means to them, and that it is easy to take for granted that the "person next to you" holds the same perceptions that you do. An example of this is a participant that suggested that they don't have a mutual understanding of what diversity means. She further suggested that she believes they need a shared language, in which she proposed to have an internal conversation in where they included the broader organization to make explicit what they understand by diversity.

Another example makes ignorance and obliviousness visible as a barrier. The example refers to the building of a new wind power station, a project described as a high paced project with a lot of pressure on time. Throughout the process, it became evident that the new buildings were planned with only a men's wardrobe. It wasn't until a female employee called attention to the lack of wardrobe facilities for women, that the issue was addressed. The buildings were planned without accessible toilets, an issue addressed by another employee having a disabled child. Finally, wardrobe facilities for women and accessible toilets were installed.

The participant giving the example reflected upon how this could happen. He believed that there hasn't been a need for having more than a men's wardrobe up until know, hence no one has ever questioned it. This way, the example can be seen in conjunction with the example above, addressing traditional understandings of what is an employee within the industry. Another participant reflected upon this by adding to the conversation that traditionally no one imagined a woman in a wind turbine. It was also remarked that although a physically disabled person would have trouble with "climbing in wind turbines", other positions should be entirely possible.

The example addressing toilet and wardrobe facilities is also an example of how issues related to diversity, equality and inclusion are not addressed systematically. Instead, the organization is dependent on employees addressing issues that they experience as problematic based on their personal experiences. This can indicate that the work on inclusion of diversity is of an arbitrary character – issues are addressed if raised, otherwise it's running the risk of being left unnoticed. Another example is given by another participant. She explains that she previously believed the office building to be fully designed for universal accessibility up until she navigated the building with a wheelchair user and discovered that several door openers didn't open the doors. Statements like "We don't have it in our bones, but we wish to get there." and "We are unconscious of our blind spots.[1]" supports the conclusion that obliviousness functions as a barrier.

"What can we manage to do about it?"

In the discussion of the question "What can we manage to do about it?" the conversation took the form of a brainstorming process in which different proposals for action were suggested by the participants. The proposals for action included changing the toilet signs where only toilets for men are available, improve the company website to be more accessible to blind and visually impaired, encourage different groups to apply for positions, reward hiring "people different from oneself", upgrade door openers and translate documents into English. The participants also agreed on that it is important to set goals, suggesting that they would have to set goals, then think of actions. This can be recognized as single loop learning where "ends are set and then the search begins for the best means of meeting those ends" (Flood and Romm 1996, p. 225).

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[1] A "blind spot" is described as "an area in which one fails to exercise judgment or discrimination" in Merriam-Webster Dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/blind%20spot). The expression, however, has been criticised for being an ableist expression. Although seemingly innocuous and normalized within our language, the expression puts a disability into a negative context when used as metaphor carrying negative connotations. In fact, it's a paradox how expressions used to address ignorance and oppression are criticised for operating oppressive themselves. Similar expressions are "falling on deaf ears" and "turning a blind eye". https://centerforlegalinclusiveness.org/Blog/9057196, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/disability-language-work_1_5f85d522c5b681f7da1c3839
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09518398.2017.1286407

The question was meant to raise dialogue about what the participants perceive as feasible change. For most part, the conversation left reflection on the company's latitude out. However, in suggesting that the company website needs upgrades to be accessible for blind and visually impaired, the participant came to a realization that they are dependent on the help of suppliers delivering services. The example opens for thinking about what is a feasible change within a broader system. In other words, thinking about what they can manage to do about a problem themselves, and where they will have to reach out to other actors.

In the conversation the participants also came to realize that all possible actions are in need of being prioritized and that effort, time and money are needed for ends to be achieved. In suggesting all documents to be translated into English, the participant noted that they have already established this as a goal and allocated money in their budgets to do this. However, she remarked that the goal has not been achieved by stating that "it didn't work out this year either". Further she reflects upon whether they are sure this is "where the shoe pinches". In this she opens the conversation to ask if they are sure that they are doing the right things and prioritizing the "differences that make a difference".

9.2 How-mode

The next three questions were explored through the fishbowl conversation method, where the group was split in two and one half engaged in the conversation, while the other half engaged in listening. Ideally, the two groups form an inner and outer circle, where the conversation takes place in the inner circle and listening takes place in the outer circle. However, on the day of carrying out the intervention, two participants had two participate through web due to being in quarantine (coronavirus). Thus, it wasn't possible to form the two circles, but the group was still divided in two, where one group consisted of three members being physically present and the other group consisted of two members being present from web and one member being physically present. However, the conversation was organised with all participants sitting around the table. In other words, the physical representation of the fishbowl was not formed, and the dialogue was organized without the physical representation of speaking in an inner circle and listening in an outer circle.

"Who can we involve to get an overall picture of the situation?"

The first question within the how-mode asked, "Who can we involve to get an overall picture of the situation?". In the dialogue there was a general agreement that a broad involvement would be beneficial. Throughout the conversation two perspectives on the purpose of involvement emerged. One perspective emphasise involvement as a matter of democratic values of representation of diversity, while the other perspective emphasise involvement as a precondition to succeed in creating changes within the organization. A participant addressed these two perspectives emerging throughout the conversation by pointing to how she sees a difference between involving people to bring people along and involving to bring in different perspectives as a value in itself.

The "democratic" discourse is primarily represented through an understanding of involvement as a means of bringing in different perspectives for the sake of representation. In this, bringing in different perspectives is seen as a value in itself. This is presented by the participants through highlighting an importance of bringing in "the entire width" of the organization, a perspective seemed to be shared by the whole group. It is also noticeably exemplified by a reflection made by a participant upon the composition of the group participating in the workshop. As mentioned earlier, the group was slightly unbalanced, with most participants belonging to HR or the management team. During the dialogue about involvement one of the participants turned to another participant, belonging to operations, expressing that it was great that he had volunteered to participate today. Which upon she proclaimed that she believes that to bring forward understanding, there is a need for bringing in different perspectives, and that she thinks that it has been enriching for the conversation to have the employee from operations participating. Within the democratic discourse also an understanding of involvement as a means of attending to minorities emerged. This is exemplified by a participant stressing the importance of inviting especially women from male dominated milieus.

The other perspective on the purpose of involvement emphasise involvement for the purpose of bringing about change. This perspective is presented through a participant highlighting that that in the end, actions for change must be sold internally, while no one likes change being "pulled over their head". However, in this perspective lies also an understanding of different outlooks being located within the organization. This comes forward through the participant explaining that they are an organization with a large span of people, being situated at different locations and departments – "the need viewed by employees within HR is not the same need seen by employees working at a power station", he explains. Another participant built upon this perspective

suggesting that the different locations could be encouraged to define their own goals and measures that they could bring further up in the organization. He believes this will secure both ownership to the process and different perspectives being considered. The latter suggestion can also be seen as a means of creating a democratic process, putting it in in conjunction with the other perspective of the purpose of involvement. Appreciating local knowledge is also an important attribute of action research where there should be room for "insiders to make their own choices" and "to give local people a greater right to define their own situation an act on it" (Greenwood and Levin 2007, p. 203).

"Who have an interest in implementing actions to promote equality and diversity?"

The conversation emerging from this question again brought up perspectives that are familiar from the individual interviews and the case description. Immediately, a participant identified the owners of the company as stakeholders having interest in the company implementing actions to promote equality and diversity. This was explained and justified through pointing to how it may lead to the company performing better financially. Other participants agreed to this standpoint. The CEO and his management team were also identified as stakeholders by a participant. This was explained by referring to that the CEO and the management team have an interest in financial performance, building the brand reputation, and creating an attractive workplace. As have also come forward earlier, these benefits a perceived as linked with having a diverse workforce. From these reflections the "benefit" discourse of diversity becomes noticeable.

Throughout the conversation, the company's corporate social responsibility is also highlighted, arguing that the wider society have an interest in the company taking responsibility in promoting equality and diversity. A participant suggests that it is important that the company take their share of responsibility to work together with the rest of Norway and Europe in promoting equality and diversity. Another participant points to how he sees the company as a manager of natural resources, which he views to be in the interest of society. From this he concludes that the company should also reflect the society's interests on other areas.

Lastly, the employees of the company are recognized as stakeholders having an interest. This standpoint appears in two forms: 1) the employees of the company are said to be engaged in social activities, and 2) an idea that diversity contributes to a better working environment.

"Who can actually contribute to implementing actions to promote equality and diversity?"

It emerges from the conversation that commitment from the CEO and the management team is considered as important. A participant described the role of the management team to be a driving force in setting goals and bring the process out in the organization. Employee unions was also mentioned through being involved in many forums in the organization. However, the participant suggesting that employee unions can contribute believed that the management team must lead the process in setting goals and actions, and that the employee unions role could be to act as a supporter, rather than setting the agenda. Building upon this statement, another participant suggested that Samarbeidsutvalget, where both the management team and union representatives are represented, can be a contributor. Moreover, human resource managers, initiating recruitment processes, were suggested. However, it was reflected upon whether they will need some sort of guidelines, to which it a participant responded that they believe an official policy that they can relate to would be beneficial. From the conversation several contributors are recognized by the participants, but it is notable that there is a reliance on the management team to be an initiator.

Beyond specific organizational roles, as above, a participant reflected upon if one could imagine that "those who best feel it on the body" can contribute. From this, a reference to the examples from earlier in the workshop, where employees with personal experience had addressed an issue, were made. Opposed to thinking of who can contribute to change by virtue of formal position, this represents thinking of change agents in terms of which experience and knowledge can be of value.

9.3 Ought-mode

Finally, the conversation went into the final stage, the ought-mode. The questions to be reflected upon in the final round was "Whose premises/which considerations were taken into account in the assessment of what and how?" and "Whose premises/which considerations ought to be taken into account in the assessment of what and how?".

During the workshop the researcher within gender and diversity studies were set to pay extra attention to which perspectives and understandings were represented and brought forward throughout the conversation, and which were not. Therefore, in introducing these final questions, there was initially given a feedback reflection on the discussion, in which she summarized her observations of whose premises and which consideration had been taken into account throughout the conversation.

In her feedback reflection, she remarked that she had noticed that from early on in the conversation there is talk of the business and which interest owners and society has in promoting equality and diversity. This has also emerged from this assessment of the intervention stage, where a perception of diversity and equality being good for the business has been presented in both the answering of what the company wants to accomplish and in whose interest it is to implement actions to promote equality and diversity. However, she also remarked that through examples of "who has seen things", other perspectives and understandings emerged – through these examples, it became noticeable that there are people throughout the organization sitting on personal experiences that can be of value. She further pronounced that she believes that there lie opportunities for development in being more considerate and conscious of whose premises one brings into the shaping of problem definitions and decision-making processes.

The participants were invited to give their thoughts on this feedback reflection, as well as their thoughts on the two reflective questions. One of the participants opened her reasoning in setting out a rhetorical question, asking "What do we know and what do we think we know?", and further suggesting if they should test the assumptions on which their understandings are built, for instance how stereotypies and confirmation bias are shaping understanding.

From here, another participant brought the conversation into a direction of reflecting upon the impact of power. In her reasoning the participant explained how she earlier in her career, then working in another company, had had clear experiences of power hierarchies within the organization she worked for. However, she expressed that she didn't recognize the working of "master suppression techniques"[2] in the case organization. She further expressed that she believes that it would have been brought to her attention if it was the case and that there has been an improvement in how women experience power hierarchies compared to when she started her

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[2] Translation of "herseteknikk", the term used by the participant. https://kjonnsforskning.no/nb/five-master-supression-techniques

career. In response to this, the facilitator of the workshop challenged the participant by asking whether she believed her now being in a position of power as a senior with a long career within the company could possibly influence her experience of improvement. This interaction is a clear example of how the facilitator consciously contributes to the shaping of the conversation and the direction of the discussion. In this example, the interaction between researcher and participant opened an opportunity for self-reflection upon how location within an organization and power structures impact the experience. This is not stating that the participant's experience with master suppression techniques and the impact of power is wrong, but rather opening up for reflecting on who is in a position to recognize what, and how the framing of a situation can change by bringing in other locations.

Throughout the conversation, there also emerged a reflection in how to bring the company's identity and history further. A participant reflected upon that one can't escape the fact that the company has a pride in their history of hydropower. Acknowledging that the company is marked by its history of male-dominance within the industry, he believes the same history has also contributed to the shaping of an identity that the company takes pride in. Further, he reflected upon whether it is right to change the charcterstics of the company giving its identity. I will summarize his worries in presenting a dilemma: How can the company be an organization promoting equality and diversity and at the same time preserve characteristics of the company identity that is influenced by the company operating in an industry where diversity for a long time have been absent? Do this pose a contradiction or conflict? There was not given any answer to this worry, and the question of how to bring the company identity and history forward was left hanging in the air.

10 Stage 4: Discussion – How did it work out?

The purpose of this project has been to develop practice of diversity management. In other words, to address how organizations can work with developing organizational change relating to diversity, equality, and inclusion. In my research question, I asked: "How can a system methodology be developed to relate to the operationalizing of empirical research and practice of diversity management

seeking to challenge inequality and enact change?" An intervention strategy was carried out to be tested as a methodology to achieve this end. In this chapter I will discuss how it worked out and reflect upon what was learnt from the intervention. Ideally, in evaluating how the intervention worked out, I should have included the participants to take part in a collective judgement. However, given the time frame for this project, it has not been possible to meet up to reflect upon the outcomes of the intervention in a collective process. It is therefore important to clarify that this discussion will represent only the perspective of the researcher.

The goal of the intervention was to create dialogue for new actions to be taken, and throughout this dialogue provide an understanding of the problem situation through collective reflection, as well as produce learning for the participants involved.

Summarizing the results of the intervention stage, it is possible to indicate that the reflective questions contributed to increasing the awareness and understanding of the problem situation. The workshop provided a context in which the participants reflected upon their own local situation and drew on each other's perspectives to engender a collective understanding. Although we were three researchers present, the dialogue was primarily unfolded by the participants building on each other in answering the reflective questions. This suggest that a greater awareness was most of all engendered through exploring their own experience from within the organization.

I would like to highlight the weight the participants put on reflecting on local examples presented by different participants throughout the workshop. While input from the researcher within gender and diversity studies assisted the participants in making sense of the situation by putting the examples in a broader comparison, as Greenwood and Levin (2007) describes the role of the professional action researcher, it was through these examples true learning and possibilities to take action for social change emerged.

This propose that bringing in principles of participation and reflective practice from action research can in be an alternative or supplement to implementing standards, registering for consultant companies' index-evaluations and get certifications, for companies in their work related to equality, diversity, and inclusion. It is clearly too early to evaluate any long-term effects of the specific intervention and its outcomes in a long run. The process, however, contributed to the participants to a greater extent taking ownership to the situation, making them better "equipped" to take actions for the future.

For me as an outsider, it became possible to recognize how the narrative of diversity being beneficial to the organization, is also an established narrative within the case organization. The narrative come forward as a hegemonic narrative in the sense that the company owners' and the management team's interests can be seen as privileged in the answering of the questions "Who have an interest in implementing actions to promote equality and diversity?", as well as how different benefits for the company was central is the dialogue about what they want to accomplish, while other means such as social justice were put to the background. This observation is consistent with former critique of diversity management. For example, Ely and Thomas (1996; 2020) suggested that there is no direct link between increasing diversity in the workforce and achieving benefits. Instead, they point to reshaping power structures as central in diversity management. Holvino and Kamp (2009) suggest that a paramount focus on the "benefit" discourse of diversity management runs the risk of reproducing existing privileges and power relations.

I will not argue that the intervention strategy served to create a dialogue concerning reshaping of power relations to the extent that it is possible to draw any conclusions on how this relate to the case organization. However, I will argue that the dialogue engendered by the reflective questions did serve to put this perspective in dialogue with other perspectives. For example, as was also remarked in the feedback reflection given by the researcher within gender and diversity studies, different examples of "who has seen things" presented by the participants, brought in different perspectives in which means of social justice and equal opportunity were present. In this sense, the intervention strategy succeeded in putting different perspectives in dialogue with each other, which supports Holvino and Kamp's (2009) call for bringing in action research methodologies to bring about organizational change through dialogue. Bringing in these perspectives, is not necessarily enough to engage in reshaping of power structures, but giving value to the perspectives of those affected by inequality and considering their experience as a legitimate source to knowledge, may contribute to achieving fairer practices.

The focus on the interests of the owners and the management team may also result from the composition of the group, where several participants belonged to the management team or had other managerial positions. A critique of the research design is that the groups of participants were unbalanced in terms of having an overweight of people in managerial roles. To be true to the participatory principle, should have included the perspective of the ordinary members of the organization. Throughout the workshop several minorities – e.g., women in male-dominated milieus, disabled and ethnic minorities – was mentioned, but not represented directly among the participants. This poses a limitation of the research design.

Bringing the project forward, the next step would be to engage in evaluating the intervention strategy together with the research participants. The discussion should centre on reflecting upon what the participants learned from the intervention, so that the learning can be carried on for future work. Moreover, the evaluation should engage in discussing and agreeing on what to do next.

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NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

Meldeskjema 367254

Sist oppdatert

14.06.2021

Hvilke personopplysninger skal du behandle?

- Navn (også ved signatur/samtykke)
- Lydopptak av personer
- Bakgrunnsopplysninger som vil kunne identifisere en person

Type opplysninger

Du har svart ja til at du skal behandle bakgrunnsopplysninger, beskriv hvilke

Stillings-/yrkestittel, utdanning

Skal du behandle særlige kategorier personopplysninger eller personopplysninger om straffedommer eller lovovertredelser?

Nei

Prosjektinformasjon

Prosjekttittel

Systemic Thinking in Diversity Management

Prosjektbeskrivelse

Formålet med prosjektet er å undersøke hvordan systemtenking kan bidra til å skape kunnskap om hvordan norske bedrifter praktiserer likestilling og mangfoldsledelse, samt hva de tenker om likestilling og mangfold. Flere organisasjoner sier at de jobber aktivt med likestilling og mangfold, og dette prosjektet ønsker å undersøke hva det faktisk betyr, og søker å få kunnskap om hvilke type tiltak som settes inn og hvilken effekt disse har.

Begrunn behovet for å behandle personopplysningene

Navn er nødvendig for å innhente samtykke fra informantene.
Lydopptak skal brukes for å gjennomføre intervjuer, som senere skal transkriberes.
Bakgrunnsopplysninger er relevante for å kunne se hvorvidt stilling i selskapet og utdanningsbakgrunn påvirker svarene fra informanter.

Ekstern finansiering

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Amalie Vågen Ystebø, amalievy@stud.ntnu.no, tlf: 47391020

Behandlingsansvar

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for økonomi (ØK) / Institutt for industriell økonomi og teknologiledelse

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Hanne Finnestrand, hanne.finnestrand@ntnu.no, tlf: 99024720

Skal behandlingsansvaret deles med andre institusjoner (felles behandlingsansvarlige)?

Nei

Utvalg 1

Beskriv utvalget

Ansatte i opptil tre norske virksomheter som har ett eller flere prosjekter for likestilling og mangfold i organisasjonen

Rekruttering eller trekking av utvalget

Rekruttering av virksomheter gjøres gjennom kontakt på mail og telefon. I dialog med ledelsen i virksomheten, velges de ansatte som er relevante for kartleggingen. Førstegangskontakt opprettes gjennom ledelsen i virksomheten, som setter meg i kontakt med relevante ansatte.

Alder

18 - 70

Inngår det voksne (18 år +) i utvalget som ikke kan samtykke selv?

Nei

Personopplysninger for utvalg 1

- Navn (også ved signatur/samtykke)
- Lydopptak av personer

Hvordan samler du inn data fra utvalg 1?

Personlig intervju

Grunnlag for å behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger

Samtykke (art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Gruppeintervju

Grunnlag for å behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger

Samtykke (art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Informasjon for utvalg 1

Informerer du utvalget om behandlingen av opplysningene?

Ja

Hvordan?

Skriftlig informasjon (papir eller elektronisk)

Tredjepersoner

Skal du behandle personopplysninger om tredjepersoner?

Nei

Dokumentasjon

Hvordan dokumenteres samtykkene?

- Elektronisk (e-post, e-skjema, digital signatur)

Hvordan kan samtykket trekkes tilbake?

Samtykke kan trekkes tilbake ved å ta kontakt på mail (amalievy@stud.ntnu.no) eller telefon (473 91 020).

Hvordan kan de registrerte få innsyn, rettet eller slettet opplysninger om seg selv?

De registrerte kan få innsyn, rettet eller slettet opplysninger om seg selv ved å ta kontakt på mail (amalievy@stud.ntnu.no) eller telefon (473 9 10 020). Vedkommende vil ved forespørsel få en kopi av sine opplysninger, og motta en bekreftelse på retting eller sletting av opplysninger dersom den registrerte ønsker dette.

Totalt antall registrerte i prosjektet

1-99

Tillatelser

Skal du innhente følgende godkjenninger eller tillatelser for prosjektet?

Behandling

Hvor behandles opplysningene?

- Maskinvare tilhørende behandlingsansvarlig institusjon
- Private enheter

Hvem behandler/har tilgang til opplysningene?

- Student (studentprosjekt)
- Prosjektansvarlig
- Interne medarbeidere

Tilgjengeliggjøres opplysningene utenfor EU/EØS til en tredjestat eller internasjonal organisasjon?

Nei

Sikkerhet

Oppbevares personopplysningene atskilt fra øvrige data (koblingsnøkkel)?

Ja

Hvilke tekniske og fysiske tiltak sikrer personopplysningene?

- Opplysningene anonymiseres fortløpende
- Adgangsbegrensning

Varighet

Prosjektperiode

02.03.2021 - 11.06.2021

Skal data med personopplysninger oppbevares utover prosjektperioden?

Nei, data vil bli oppbevart uten personopplysninger (anonymisering)

Hvilke anonymiseringstiltak vil bli foretatt?

- Lyd- eller bildeopptak slettes
- Personidentifiserbare opplysninger fjernes, omskrives eller grovkategoriseres

Vil de registrerte kunne identifiseres (direkte eller indirekte) i oppgave/avhandling/øvrige publikasjoner fra prosjektet?

Nei

Tilleggsopplysninger

NSD NORSK SENTER FOR FORSKNINGSDATA

NSD sin vurdering

Prosjekttittel

Systemic Thinking in Diversity Management

Referansenummer

367254

Registrert

01.03.2021 av Amalie Vågen Ystebø - amalievy@stud.ntnu.no

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for økonomi (ØK) / Institutt for industriell økonomi og teknologiledelse

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Hanne Finnestrand, hanne.finnestrand@ntnu.no, tlf: 99024720

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Amalie Vågen Ystebø, amalievy@stud.ntnu.no, tlf: 47391020

Prosjektperiode

02.03.2021 - 11.06.2021

Status

14.06.2021 - Avsluttet

Vurdering (1)

07.05.2021 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet med vedlegg den 07.05.2021, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD. Behandlingen kan starte.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET
Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 11.06.2021.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG
Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er

at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake.

Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER
NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

· lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen
· formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke behandles til nye, uforenlige formål
· dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet
· lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER
Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), og dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.
Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER
NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og/eller rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER
Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema
Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET
NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!