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Organisations as Gateways for Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities

Organisationer som inkörsportar för invandrare och etniska minoriteter

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Both public organisations, such as local governments, and private organisations, can be seen as gateways for immigrants into the new country. This paper discusses the manner in which such organisations address fundamental gateway concepts such as empowerment and diversity, and how the interpretations of these affect their actions.

KEYWORDS: public organisations, organisational diversity, empowerment, collectivity, country comparison, European Union

Introduction

Both public organisations, such as local governments[1], and private organisations, can be seen as gateways for immigrants into the new country. This paper will discuss the manner in which such organisations address fundamental gateway concepts such as empowerment and diversity, and how the interpretations of these affect their actions. The interpretations are of relevance, not only for their 'gate-keeping' actions of facilitating the inclusion of immigrants and minorities, but also for the organisational image and pattern they create.

The discussion and analysis of this article builds on participation in a transnational partnership within the framework of the European Social Fund's *Equal Program*. The partnership consists of two local governments, Bradford in England and Malmö in Sweden, the regional state organisation of Bremen and Bremerhafen in Germany, and two Danish companies, Tele Denmark (TDC) and Danish Rail (DSB). The empirical data builds on field notes gathered at partnership conferences and seminars, as well as conversations with the partners. The definitions of empowerment analysed in this article originate from a seminar held at the conference on empowerment in Bradford in January 2004. During the seminar we tested what representatives from the different organisations meant by the concept of empowerment in their current practices. Our interpretation of the results points to significant differences in how the concept is viewed.

A First Comparison

Discussions of the integration of ethnic minorities take place at several levels: EU level, the national level, municipality level and the organisational level. It can be assumed that these levels interact, but are there universal principles for the development, or does the development follow separate trajectories on different hierarchical levels? Following an examination of European use of the concept of diversity management, Wrench (2003) suggests the following categories:

1. Training of immigrants
2. Making space for cultural differences
3. Challenging racist attitudes
4. Counteracting discrimination
5. Having policies for equal opportunities and positive discrimination.
6. Diversity management

Wrench also poses the question as to whether organisations can 'skip' categories 1-5 and move directly to number 6; diversity management. He appears to suggest that such a simplification leads to superficial and weak changes in the organisation. A diversity management policy should include minimum demands, which means that making sole use of category 6, or categories 1, 2 and 6 is not sufficient. The policy of diversity must not be too weak when it comes to policies on discrimination or equal opportunities, even though in many cases current use of the concept diversity management is seen as an 'an easy way out' of meeting demands and needs relating to the integration of ethnic minorities and immigrants in EU countries and organisations . In the cases discussed in this article, the organisations' stance has differing focal points. For example, the local government authority of Bradford, in England, appears to work with all the aforementioned categories and combines internal organisational measures with external measures aimed at minorities and actors in society. The German state of Bremen and Bremerhafen mainly focuses on categories 1, 2 and 6 in their work with external actors in society, minorities and companies. These differences are illustrated later in the article. Eager advocates of diversity management often neglect differences in national culture, institutions and traditions, and the socio-cultural structures and processes of companies and authorities. These differences cannot be neglected, however, as practice differs between countries and organisations, and a complete cultural relativism (that is to completely disregard cultural factors) hardly benefits the possibilities of learning from each other across national and organisational boundaries.

The concept of empowerment, together with various anti-discrimination measures, has been part of a European perspective since the 1970s. The concepts of diversity and diversity management were developed later, in the 1990s. Using interpretations of the concept of empowerment and diversity in different national and organisational contexts, the aim of this study is to seek answers to questions concerning diversity management.

It is not our intention to make any detailed examination of the laws that are specifically directed towards the different actors on the labour market in the four countries studied with reference to categories 1-5. Clearly, states make laws and supervise the work on integration in a number of different ways and that affect the organisations concerned. The EU is also active in this field through, for example, directives on 'Race and Equality', which concern contributions made toward the training and employment of immigrants, anti-discrimination laws, equal opportunity laws and occasionally support for positive discrimination. Diversity management and an increased space for cultural differences appear to be areas that are difficult to influence directly through laws, although indirect influence does affect both national and local government organisations (*EU's Equal Program*).

Purpose

The purpose of this article is to examine how empowerment and diversity are interpreted by the different organisations and to analyse differences in the interpretations. The purpose is also to discuss the following questions:

1. In what way do national contexts influence the interpretations?
2. What are the consequences of the interpretations on the organisation's actions?
3. How can we understand the space for organisational change in relation to diversity and empowerment?
4. What significance does diversity management have on the development of organisations?

Empowerment: A Brief Outline

Empowerment is a concept that became popularised in the 1970s and can be traced back to 'black' ("Black Power") and feminist movements in the US. While empowerment for the black movement mainly concerned traditional political demands for more resources, for the women's movement the concept has had more of a 'therapeutic'

meaning in terms of aiming for an increased consciousness. According to Lars Trädgårdh (2000:24), it is possible to "sense a highly 'American' element in the idea of empowerment, an emphasis on self-actualization, liberation and emancipation, on 'life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness', as it is expressed in the US constitution. (…) On the other hand it concerns more than individualism; the collective dimension, which is summed up in the idea of *community empowerment*, is equally important". One of the principal sources of inspiration for the empowerment movement is, in fact, also an important resource to the community movement, namely Richard John Neuhaus and Peter Berger's *To Empower People* from 1977 (Trädgårdh 2000:19, Dionne 2000:104).

Empowerment is a concept that has been used frequently across the political spectrum, both among those who demand more state resources to give people power over their lives, and those that see the state as a threat to civil society and people's independence.

In Sweden, young Social Democrats as well as Conservatives have embraced the concept. However, as Trädgårdh (2000:51) concludes, transferring a concept from one environment to another is not without complication: "In Sweden the deeply rooted anti-etatism is not present, and neither the idea of community nor the therapeutically-tinted emphasis on individual self-actualization seems to be as prominent as in the US." Empowerment is defined differently, and thus the concept is given different meanings in organisational theory, in political science and by institutions such as the EU.[2]

Empowerment in Organisation Theory

Manuela Pardo del Val and Bruce Lloyd (2003) have discussed empowerment as a management concept, or more specifically as a part of a participatory concept. Participatory management is based on the idea of managing organisations by engaging their employees in the decision-making process in such a way that the employees think strategically and become personally responsible for quality in their work-tasks. However, this does not mean that there is an absence of managers superintending the organisation as a whole and assisting the employees in such matters as training and remuneration. Pardo del Val and Lloyd also point out that the concept of empowerment is used in many different contexts and has no fixed definition.

William M. Bernstein (2003) uses the term empowerment in a different way. He sees empowerment as a consequence of "organisational development theories", i.e. of theories based principally on psychological research. This research revolves around questions of

conformity, attitudinal change and behavioural change among individuals, groups and organisations. Empowerment, when coupled to psychologically-based organisational-change theories, becomes a question of creating motivation among employees so that they do their best for the organisation and increase its efficiency. But Bernstein questions whether it is possible for an organisation to make an impact on the motivation and self-fulfilment of employees at the individual and internal level, and also wonders whether external reward systems are sufficient to mobilise the individual's powers for the organisation's purposes.

Empowerment and Political Science

When the term empowerment is used in the context of political science it seems natural to invoke the concept of participation. The empowerment concept connects with such "classical" areas of political science interest as democracy and power, local politics and social movements. Just as in other contexts, the term empowerment does not have any clear-cut definition in political science theory. Empowerment seems to be used chiefly in the context of local politics and local issues, and in connection with sundry grass-roots movements in which a bottom-up perspective is important to an understanding of the term. Above all, empowerment is used when political scientists are discussing the accessibility of diverse parts of the political system, especially at local level, to vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, women or third-world poor. Questions that might come under the spotlight include whether and how people in various minorities vote, and may also concern the possibilities available to such groups of attaining positions of power in diverse parts of the political system. The term empowerment has often been used to describe and analyse developments in deprived areas of large American cities, the position of minorities in the political system, and how minorities can gain access to power and control over important public resources such as schools, especially at local level (Chambers 2003, Kaufmann 2003).

Empowerment and the EU

The empowerment concept has come into widespread use during recent years both in Sweden and in the EU. At first the term signified participation and co-determination, but has since acquired a broader meaning. Perhaps this results from prevailing ambivalence and confusion as to the concept's content and meaning. One interesting example of this is the criticism made of the Swedish ESF (European Social Fund) Council in the *Equal Program's* interim report, in which it is remarked that

there tend to be as many possible definitions of the word empowerment as there are people one asks about it *(Halvtidsutvärdering EQUAL programmet i Sverige)*.

According to this EU perspective on empowerment, the concept is to be understood as a process that is intended to combat discrimination at diverse levels. Empowerment is a matter of changing the existing balance of power; in other words, more power to those who have little power. The concept is also given a meaning based on the individual as an autonomous person of political character, rather than an employee as colleague in an organisation.

Empowerment as both concept and method is also used by other organisations, including the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), which distinguishes between the concepts of empowerment and disempowerment. The Commission defines empowerment as a process by which men and women who find themselves in disadvantaged circumstances in society are to be given access to knowledge, resources and decision making. They are to become more involved at all levels of society and increase participation in society at large. According to the Commission's definition, disempowerment is the complete opposite, and includes all actions that in any way reduce the opportunities of men and women to increase their participation in the "civil" society (*UNHCR, EU's Equal Program*).

Thus far we have been able to establish that it is difficult to find any consensus with regard to the content of the empowerment concept. However, we have been able to find important emphases in the various definitions that have been cited, marked by words like process, liberation, participation and redistribution of power. The word 'process' implies that it is a matter of constant movement; of not merely *whether* but also *how* participation takes place rather than a referral to any given structure. Empowerment is a concept in which movement permeates an entire course of action regardless of whether an organisation or a society is involved. Moreover, empowerment can be regarded as a kind of liberation process; a means whereby oppressed and marginalized groups may secure more power and thus liberate themselves from the shackles of oppression and marginalisation. The concept also has a qualitative and instrumental aspect to it in that it implies participation, inasmuch as through this process the members of an organisation or society come to feel an enhanced sense of participation that leads to strengthened motivation and commitment, particularly in the local environment. Finally, the term redistribution of power means that power is not constant and given, but is available to more individuals/groups in an organisation or society, for example, by

participating in decision-making processes that affect their own situations. When viewed from the perspective of power, empowerment is closely linked with the idea of quantity, i.e. of more people having a chance to participate.

Diversity - What is it?

To clearly state exactly what the concept of diversity entails is difficult, for just as empowerment, diversity is a highly complex concept. The concept of diversity refers to the variation of social and cultural identities and processes for individuals as well as collectives. First and foremost, it is important to conclude that diversity concerns 'difference' in some form (Cox 1993, Kandola & Fullerton 1998, Roth 2000, Westin 2001). Different metaphors have been used to explain and give meaning to the concept of diversity. The most common metaphors for diversity, or pluralism, include an orchestra, a bowl of salad and mosaics. Occasionally the metaphor 'melting pot' is used to describe pluralism, even though this particular metaphor has, in practice, lead to assimilation (Roth 1996). The Jewish philosopher Horace Kallen, for example, uses the orchestra metaphor to explain cultural pluralism:

> As in a orchestra every type of instrument has its specific timbre and tonality, founded in its substance and form; as every type has its appropriate theme and melody in the whole symphony, so in society, each ethnic group may be the natural instrument, its temper and culture may be its theme and melody and the harmony and dissonances and discords of them all may make the symphony of civilization (Kallen 1998 [1915]: 116).

The citation from Kallen – who has been called "the first multiculturalist" (Miller 1998:80) – shows clearly how the metaphors of pluralism, or diversity if you prefer, are used to clarify this condition of affairs. Roth (1996:31) argues that: "The metaphors have the common factor that they are used emotively in order to accentuate the positive and fruitful aspects of cultural diversity".

In other words, in a positive sense diversity is a matter of qualitative human difference. We can, however, also view diversity as a quantitative concept. Diversity then becomes a matter of discovering, for example, how frequently different ethnic and cultural groups occur in an organisation; itself a representative and descriptive aspect (Westin 2001).

Thus far we have ascertained that diversity involves some kind of observation of difference in an organisation, which we can either count or relate to. If we take our discussion of the diversity concept

further from the standpoint of organisation theory, we can discern an interesting distinction between diversity as an end and as a means (cf. Westin 2001). Taking the perspective of diversity as a means, diversity can, for example, be a means of enlarging the workforce to include individuals from ethnic groups other than those from which recruitment has traditionally taken place, i.e. a means of increasing the number of ethnically distinct individuals or groups. Diversity thus becomes an instrument for avoiding breaches of anti-discrimination legislation or combating an ethnically segregated organisation. Diversity from a means perspective may also be intimately bound up with a quantitative diversity outlook. In terms of diversity as an end, this perspective is not primarily concerned with counting heads but rather regards diversity as having value in itself (cf. Roth 1996). Diversity is the end in view, and if the organisation achieves diversity a variety of different benefits will accrue. These benefits may include, for example, cultural development (cf. Roth 1996), a larger labour market, a better service to customers, or a better and more creative climate in the organisation (cf. Broomé et al. 2001). Even though the diversity concept in its original character of organisational policy is normative and qualitative, the organisation's internal checks, for example as expressed in the incidence of ethnic diversity, tend to focus on quantitative aspects while the qualitative aspects – its associated value – are given less prominence and the link with organisational profits therefore becomes blurred.

Diversity, in the sense of difference, seems to be an overarching and necessary condition for empowerment to function and, by definition, seems obvious. While diversity in terms of difference and variation of ethnic background is a wider concept that can be used to express an organisation's integration goals, it does not represent total clarity of what one means by diversity as an end or a means.

Diversity as a goal is a collective concept. The accentuation of tolerance, acceptance and respect for differences between groups and individuals, which the goals of diversity entail, leads to possibilities for the liberation and shifts of power that are embedded in the concept of empowerment. It concerns those groups and individuals in an organisation that want to liberate themselves from oppressive forms of work, work environments, or norms and rules that hinder self-actualisation and the ability to develop.

Furthermore, we could point to what we might refer to as an organisational confusion and insecurity, partly due to the ambiguity of the concept of diversity. In view of this, measures for empowerment will in turn strengthen organisational insecurity. Thus, if for different reasons the goal (diversity) does not permeate the whole organisation,

then empowerment in an instrumental sense in the form of staff involvement and decentralization of decisions, in for example recruitment work, can bring widely differing results to the practical work of diversity.

Our interpretation of the concept empowerment is that it is mainly an instrumental concept or tool, and as such inferior to the concept of diversity; it means liberation and power shifts in real everyday life. In order to give the concept of empowerment a wider meaning and a reasonable connection to diversity as a goal, it must be connected not only to the under-representation of differences within one's own organisation but also to that under-representation outside such individual organisations.

Diversity management is recent strategy concept that aims to achieve a better representation of excluded minorities and immigrants in employment. It is said to differ from previous employment equity approaches such as equal opportunity and affirmative action in several ways. Firstly, its rationale is one of improving organisational competitiveness and efficiency, which means that it is driven by business aspects and market advantage. Secondly, it is argued to be a more positive approach than the somewhat negative approach of simply avoiding transgressions of the anti-discrimination laws. Thirdly, diversity management is seen as an inclusive policy, and as such aims to avoid any possible future backlash from majorities, particularly as it is not directed solely towards the interests of the excluded or underrepresented minorities but represents the interest of all employees.

The philosophy of diversity management has been the target of considerable criticism. It is argued that the metaphor 'melting-pot', with its overtones of assimilation, creates a false image of harmony in organisations where the whole is "enriched by the differences of its component parts" (Kersten 2000). Some critics regard diversity management as a fashionable philosophy and an embellishing package of the dilemma and conflicts of ethnic and cultural differences that are the state of the art in organisations (Prasad & Mills 1997, Prasad & Prasad 2004), while others seem to imply that, in practice, there is not much difference between diversity management and equal opportunity approaches (Wood 2003). This goes to show that diversity management is hardly a clear-cut concept. It is rather ascribed a range of different interpretations ranging from precise normative models of management (Cox 1993) to all-inclusive models of everything that concerns the policies and measures relevant to the employment of immigrants and minorities.

Looking at how Kandola and Fullerton (1998:8) define diversity management gives us a better picture:

> The basic concept of managing diversity accepts that the workforce consists of a diverse population of people. The diversity consists of visible and non-visible differences which will include factors such as sex, age, background, race, disability, personality and work-style. It is founded on the premise that harnessing these differences will create a productive environment in which everybody feels valued, where their talents are fully utilized and in which organizational goals are met.

If we are to draw conclusions from the above definition of diversity management, it follows that a diversity management policy is not only a statement of the content of diversity, but also a statement of its value to the organisation, its personnel and the customers. This is not sufficient, however. As many commentators have agreed, a diversity management policy must contain something specific, namely, a striving for diversity that implies more than an effort to create equal opportunities for everyone. A diversity management policy must embrace specific methods that the leadership and management of a diverse staff can make use of and that contribute to both organisational efficiency and its business (Wise 2000:3).

This way of defining management comes close to the concepts of diversity and empowerment discussed earlier. Diversity can be said to relate to the contents and value of diversity management and empowerment, and to the functional or instrumental part of the concept.

Methodological Considerations

Our analysis of the concept of empowerment builds on there being connections between national, social and cultural ideas in each respective country and organisational occurrences that facilitate the integration of ethnic minorities. Below we argue that some organisational structures have longevity (hold in the long run) and that these decide the organisational collectives' current stance and behaviour in relation to the ethnic diversity of individuals. Large organisational collectives, such as companies and authorities, are also characterised by smaller collectives that are have shorter life-spans and are more fleeting and mobile in a social and cultural sense. These smaller or organisational collectives also decide whether it is possible to integrate ethnic differences in the interplay between organisation and individual. From this latter perspective of process and in terms of which differences can be ascribed more or less space, integration is thus a question of how meaningful the collective is and how much

meaning it creates for individuals. We have collected empirical data from the City of Malmö's administrative workplaces, but lack such data for other partners. The discussion concerning the perspective of process on integration therefore builds mainly on theories of individuality and collectivity rather than the empirical material of participating organisations.

An important question is how we chose to look at the empirical material, or rather what metaphors we decided to use in order to create an understanding of the empirical material, and which form the basis of our interpretations. Metaphors are frequently used within qualitative research on organisations and involve the posing of questions such as: "what happens if we understand the organisation as a political system in comparison to what happens if we understand the organisation as a culture?" Different methodological doors open depending on which metaphor is used (Morgan 1999). We have chosen to pose the question: "what happens if we understand the organisation as a text?" This means that in this study, field notes, conversations, praxis etc., will be understood as texts. Furthermore, the choice of the text metaphor means that this article's purpose is to study the discursive traits in a view of empowerment and diversity in four different contexts.

The actual method with this methodological background can also be mentioned. The easiest way of explaining this method is to call it interpretation. Interpretation is about seeking to understand the underlying meanings. The sociologist Johan Asplund (1970:11) summarises this very clearly by saying:

> The occurrence of a social phenomenon, P, raises a large number of questions, for example: Does P occur in all places or merely in some? Is P connected to this category of places? Is P connected to a category of people rather than this category of places? Has P always had its present character or did P use to be different? Who benefits from P? What is the reason for P? (…) One can then ask: what does P mean?

Asplund (1970:126) actually goes further in his discussion of interpretation: "It is understood – except in cases of aspect blindness – that this or that can be seen as this or that. But how could the discussion proceed from this point? Is the question 'Why the hell?' maybe the adequate way of continuing the discussion?" This particular question (minus Asplund's strong language) is one we have also posed when considering our empirical data.

Theoretical Framework: Collectivity and Boundaries

The simplest translation of the concept of a collective is perhaps to be found in the term 'group'. However, the concept is much more complex than that as can range from, for example, very small groups working together to large ones where there is no personal communication at all, or from a very clearly purposed collective like a tennis club to a less obviously purposed collective like a nation (Malesevic & Haugard 2002). Organisational researchers Alvesson and Kärreman (2003) discuss the concept and conclude that it can stand for some kind of social formation; a social structure. However, they continue the discussion and introduce the term collectivity, a perspective of process stemming from the basic idea that the basis of the collective is a social phenomenon found at the intersection between 'the social' and 'the cultural'. Alvesson and Kärreman (2003:2) argue that

> [c]ollectives refer to social units, while collectivity is more the aspects of individuals and small groups being linked up or experiencing a link up to a broader social unit. (…) People in a collectivity are bound together by some trait, such as kinship, employment status or shared fate (e.g. unemployment).

In this sense of the word collectivity, reference is made to the aspects that create meaning; the cultural aspects of collectivity. The term can therefore be said to refer to both social and cultural factors. While collectivity concerns a social sphere, it is always defined by difference(s) of opinion.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2003:4) argue that collectivity can be understood as a type of in-between area in that it is less macro than social units such as class or nation and not as micro as small groups. This means that the concept can be seen rather as a meso-concept: "collectivity in this sense ends with the experience-horizon and is not used for the study of 'abstract' collective units such as occupations and formal organizations". Collectivity thus refers to the term process; to social and cultural processes. From this process perspective collectivity can be regarded as socially constructed artefacts that are produced and reproduced via different social processes. Alvesson and Kärreman argue that this also means that collectivity can be understood as both a long-term and short-term perspective. The long-term perspective means that collectivity must be understood as being historically bound, whereas the short-term perspective means that while collectivity has limits, these limits must be seen in the light of being: "[…] outcomes of continuous negotiations and, thus, as products of social processes rather than as properties of the object under study".

Esping-Andersen (1990) discusses three separate models in an analysis of modern capitalist society. Firstly, he points to the American capitalist society, which is based on the individual. The individual is the fundamental capitalist unit in the building of American society. In this form of capitalism the individual strives for the greatest possible wealth and creates it 'with his own hands'. The organisation of society supports this idea and behaviour in different ways, such as individual ownership, systems of insurance and individual contracts in the labour market. The political task is to safeguard the possibilities of the individual and its freedom from collective dependence. The Nordic model appears as the complete opposite of that capitalist model. In the Nordic countries, capitalism builds on strong collectives, labour market unions and employers' collectives. The political task is to regulate the rights and obligations of the collectives and, as a last resort, find compromises for the common good. The third model of modern capitalism is known as Central European. Here the family is the fundamental unit and the wealth and welfare of the family is the first priority. Belonging to the family forms the basis of partaking in professional life, for insurance systems and the writing of contracts. The political task is to guarantee work, welfare, protection and safety for family members. The three models can be seen as making up decisive national contexts and limits for organizational collectives such as companies and authorities in their ability and behaviour concerning the interplay between individuality and collectivity in the organisational integration of ethnic minorities and for that matter differences in a general sense.

The short-term perspective of collectivity entails that attention is drawn towards *how* the collective "moves back and forth between being targeted and centred, versus being sidestepped and latent" (Alvesson & Kärreman 2003:4). The short-term perspective thus largely concerns *how* a 'we' is created in the present and *how* boundaries are moved in everyday life and limit the shaping of individuality and dictate the space for difference. The long-term perspective's stability sets the frames within which collectivity is created and the processes that occur in the present in the interplay between individuality and collectivity. The stability of the long-term perspective is relative, and in that sense all collectives can be seen as processes with fluid boundaries. However, the capitalist models that Esping-Andersen have suggested should be considered as stable social and cultural instruments that can be used for analyses of organisations in different national contexts and the collectivity that is shaped in organisations.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2003:5 f) point out that eight different dimensions are involved in an analysis of collectivity and include:

Vertical relations – the degrees of experience of collectivity cutting across hierarchical levels.

Scope – what is the extent of this experience of collectivity?

Emotions – the type and intensity of feelings involved.

Cognitive clues – the ascription of meanings associated with the membership of the collective.

Affiliation status – the extent to which collectivity membership refers to a particular status category (club feeling of superiority, underdog position).

Community – the extent to which the collectivity indicates the experience of being a part of an affectively bounded social group (comradeship, Gemeinschaft), positively defined, having a value in itself.

Presence – the frequency of invocation of the collective. The presence may be in discourse and/or manifested in specific acts of collectivity (rites and ceremonies expressing social-integrative qualities)

Thickness of experience – the extent notions of collectivity permeates individual experiences.

It is remarkable how we often perceive our own workplaces as something unique, despite the fact that – at least at a superficial glance – similarities between workplaces usually dominate. It is only as a result of more in-depth study that differences and the particulars stand out (Asplund 1987). Representatives of organisations often point to its production capacity, its goals and common values, and its unique identity, which in many cases represent an important source of identification for its members. However, there are other bases of identification for members of the organisation. The aforementioned eight dimensions suggest that individuals relate to a wider range of dimensions and that identification and belonging to an organisation has a much more complex basis. Individuals do not only join a formal organisa-

tional identity and a visible organisational culture, but also a more or less overt collectivity or social grouping that is defined culturally. This is of importance for the individuality that is shaped in the collectivity. A number of questions can be investigated concerning collectivity with reference to diversity and empowerment, for example: Is empowerment through personal development a question of developing social relations and spaces for cultural differences, or is it a question of individual achievements? To what extent does diversity, that is to say individual difference, constitute a meaningful part of the membership that the members assign to the collectivity? How is the presence of difference in the organisation, whether ethnic or otherwise, expressed through rites and ceremonies? To what extent is high status marked by diversity and empowerment part of the unique and particular that members refer to?

Within the framework of this article it is not possible to apply the eight dimensions of Esping-Andersen's capitalist models. However, it is more than likely that an investigation of the experiences and ideas of individuality and collectivity in countries and organisations with different capitalist models will yield widely differing results in the eight dimensions of collectivity. It is assumed in the article that long-term national contexts influenced by different capitalist models both connect with and set limits to the process that constructs individuality and collectively. If the limits are seen as a structure, they are most easily understood in terms of, for example, the borders of a nation that gives rise to a judicial citizenship. If, on the other hand, the limits are seen as a process, it becomes a necessary phenomenon in order to construct a collectivity that creates meaning to the individual member. It concerns processes of inclusion and exclusion. It concerns who is a member and who is a stranger. Asplund (1983:58) writes:

> Imagine a characteristic agricultural society. In this community the whole dominates the parts or singularities. The individual is embedded in the association or merges with it. But under these conditions one can temporarily come in to contact with a clearly separate individual. One may encounter a stranger, for example, in the shape of a wandering peddler. The stranger can not be seen as an aspect of family and living conditions. The stranger is a stranger precisely because he appears free from such relations. (Authors' translation)

Asplund uses the sociologist Georg Simmel to create order in his discussion between individual and collective. But Simmel (1995) refers to the fact that the stranger tends to stay on and becomes a more or less permanent stranger. Therefore, this can be understood that stranger

and strangeness is a kind of organizing factor that creates borders between the known and the unknown; between different collectivities in the wake of an increased migration. The process perspective of an increased interaction between individuality and collectivity does not mean that attention is only given to the question of who is a member of a collective and who is not, but also to the question of how the individual's experiences of membership in a collective shapes individuality and collectivity.

The Four Contexts

Malmö

During the mid-1900s, Malmö matured as an industrial city with circa 50 percent of the work force employed in industries dominated by textiles, construction and shipbuilding. During the second half of the 1900s the industrial city changed into a society characterised by service and information-related businesses. Employment has increased steeply, particularly in the public sector (circa 30 percent of the working population is currently employed in the public sector) and local government (with a staff of circa 21,000 employees in the services and civil government). Immigration has always been part of the city's history.

Immigration has increased significantly since the 1950s and today approximately 37 percent of the population is of foreign descent and approximately 24 percent direct foreign origin. The migrant element of the population is not dominated by any particular ethnic group; it is said that 161 countries are represented in Malmö. Ranked according to size, the largest immigration groups of today have their origin in former Yugoslavia, Poland, Iraq, Denmark, Lebanon, Hungary, Finland, Rumania, Chile, Germany and Somalia. Labour immigration dominated the period 1950-1970, and after that refugee and immigration for purposes of reunion became dominant. Since the 1970s immigration has not only led to an ethnically and culturally mixed population, but also to quite significant problems for the city. As a consequence the employment of people born abroad dropped dramatically in comparisons to those born in Sweden, whereas the dependence on welfare of immigration households has increased dramatically and an increasing segregation of residences has dichotomized the city socially, economically and culturally in certain eastern and western parts (Bjurling 1994, *Välfärd för alla, Mångfald som personalidé*).

Alarmed by the situation, Malmö City Council of writes:

> Malmö is going through a thorough and positive perios of development, with new companies, an expanding university and a market growth in the region of Öresund. The city's physical structure has assumed a quality and function that is an asset to inhabitants and visitors alike. From a national perspective the population is young and a resource for growth to be reckoned with, especially from a regional perspective. But Malmö also faces great challenges that demand that all parts of society cooperate and collaborate. If such a gathering of forces does not happen the available resources will be wasted, and Malmö will face the risk that gaps, alienation and segregation will counteract the exploitation of these positive resources. The differences in standards of living are still significant and welfare is very unevenly distributed between the different parts of the city (*Välfärd för alla*).

Bradford

Bradford is situated at the heart of what was once northern England's heavy woollen industry. In 1841, for example, there were 38 woollen mills in Bradford, and 79 in the surrounding area. Bradford soon became the centre of wool production and processing in England. The industrialisation of woollen textile production led to the town's rapid expansion between 1800 and 1850. In 1801, Bradford was a small rural town of approximately 6,400 inhabitants. Thirty years later the population had grown to around 97,000 inhabitants, Bradford increased dramatically in the following 20 years, and in 1851 the town could boast some 182,000 inhabitants. During the early textile era people mainly moved to Bradford from the surrounding countryside, but as time passed the composition of the workforce changed. People now came to the city from Ireland, Germany and Italy. Bradford's multicultural population of today therefore has a relatively long history. Up to 1945 Bradford's migrant population was mainly made up of European workers, but in the post-war era, after many of the British colonies had claimed their independence, Bradford experienced a new wave of immigration. During this period, not only people from all over Europe arrived, but also those from former British colonies, the West Indies and Pakistan. Unrest in Asia during the 1980s drew even more people to Bradford. An encompassing immigration due to family reunification led to a certain dominance of the immigrated population by people with a Pakistani background. Such large immigration also created conflicts between different groups, which lead to the racial rioting that received international attention during the 1990s in connection with public burnings of Salman Rushdie's book, *The Satanic Verses* (Lewis 1997, *Bradford's Equal Program*).

Bremen and Bremerhafen

Bremen and Bremerhafen are situated in, and make up the smallest of the 16 German states, Bremen, which is also known by its official name of the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen. The City of Bremen is situated approximately 60 km from Bremerhafen, the largest German port on the North Sea. These two cities can best be described as industrial cities and today have a diversified population with a relatively large Turkish minority and large problems with labour immigration. Bremen has a 1,200 year long history: important trade and Hanseatic city, the target of massive bombings during World War 2 (as was Bremerhafen), developed as an industrial city with Mercedes-Benz as the most internationally known industry after World War 2. The neighbouring city of Bremerhafen was founded about 170 years ago in 1827 when the city of Bremen was in need of a port. Today about 130,000 people live in Bremerhafen, while over 300,000 people earn their living by working there. Like Malmö and Bradford, both cities are now going through a structural process in which industry has largely lost ground to the production of services. The state of Bremen has problems with high unemployment among its immigrant population. However, in the German context, certain characteristics are important. Schiffauer (1997:159) argues:

> [o]n the other hand, there is the strong idea that a group that is part of German society should have the right to be represented in the public domain – the idea being that stable identification with society as a whole is only possible if the particular [….] is a recognized part of the whole. This, by the way, is one of the reasons for the very hesitant attitude of the German public to the admission of new groups into the nation: integration into German society usually takes one to two generations longer than in other European cultures.

The quotation points to the existence of ideas about immigrants in Germany and in the state of Bremen and Bremerhafen that make the integration of immigrants both slow and painful (Yalcin-Heckman 1997, *Bremen and Bremerhanfen's Equal Program*).

TDC and DSB

The Danish context is different from the other three in that companies are at the centre rather than local governments, or regional states as in the German case. The Danish companies are TDC, an international telecommunications company, and DSB, the organisation responsible for the Danish railway. These companies argue that while the important driving force of the companies is naturally to make a profit,

it is also important to demonstrate societal involvement. According to TDC and DSB, these dual goals can easily be combined with clear systems of common values. The companies work with different forms of activities to realise systems of common values and achieve their double-barrelled goals. These activities are characterised by a desire to partly increase the number of immigrants from ethnic minorities taken on as staff and partly to find interesting groups of customers among the ethnic minorities through different forms of aimed measures, like for example, TDC's Turkish-speaking customer service. (TDC's and DSB's *Equal Program*; Brandi & Hildebrandt 2003)

Empowerment and Diversity: A Contextual Analysis

During the aforementioned transnational Equal conference, we tested what representatives of the partaking countries meant by the concept of empowerment in terms of actual practice. Our interpretation of the results points to significant differences in how the concept is viewed. The representatives from Bradford put forward the following definition in the discussions:

> *The opportunity to initiate and revise questions that affect recipients (that is to say ethnic minorities within the local government).*

> *Possibilities for the recipients to suggest measures/solutions, and opportunities for the recipients to deliver these solutions THEMSELVES!*

In Bradford, where the local government is the main Equal Program actor, the concept was considered to emanate from being open to the differences between people, that this demands mutual appreciation, that one means well, and that there is a personal and collective involvement. Measures aimed at people from ethnic minorities to bring about an increased participation in professional, political and social life in the local government should build on the idea that solutions for 'disempowered persons' should come from those who are to benefit from the measures. People from the majority groupings must embrace both the solutions and those that bring them.

As far as we can assess, the character of the English definition of empowerment lies in that it first of all seems to assume the well-meaning of people from the majority groupings. Secondly, it seems to mainly be based on an individual perspective that can shadow the power relations that affect the relationship between the majority collective and the minority collective in Bradford, despite the fact that the main actor is a local government with clear conflicts between majority and minority groups. Thirdly, sensitivity to the perspective-

from-below in the English definition of empowerment in earlier and existing relations between ethnic groups and economic and social classes in British society (sensitivity and respect are necessary to avoid riots!) also plays a part.

The Malmö representatives put forward the following definition in the discussions:

> Strengthen the possibilities for employers and employees through changing structures and attitudes.

In the local government of Malmö it is argued that empowerment requires changes of structures and processes. It concerns improving things for those that are disempowered by first and foremost strengthening the possibilities of employers and employees to increase employment for under-employed groups (immigrants).

The character of the Swedish definition of empowerment is mainly influenced by some sort of collective feeling of guilt; it is due to structures and attitudes that there are disempowered people in Malmö (it does not correlate with the Swedish welfare ideals of high and full employment). Secondly, a 'we and them' thought pattern is discernible where a superior organisational 'we' has the responsibility of improving matters for 'them', thus favouring a helping stance and service perspective. Thirdly, the personal responsibility of those that belong to a disempowered minority is not emphasised. There seems to be a structural game between we-and-them collectives in the local labour market, which does not single out the individual and individual responsibility or take a perspective-from-below stance for eventual solutions. The lack of clarity is obvious in the question of where the responsibility lies for empowering people (companies, authorities, individuals or groups) in the Swedish definition.

The representatives from the state of Bremen and Bremerhafen contributed the following definition to the discussions:

> An ability to be an active part in the labour market, which for example involves: knowledge, information, motivation, self-confidence, knowing one's own value on the market and an awareness of personal skills as well as professional qualifications.

> A win-win situation for employers and employees, by means of seeing beyond rigid structures in the workplace.

In German Bremen and Bremerhafen it is argued that individuals from ethnic minorities need to be activated by means of different measures

to increase their knowledge and motivation. An improvement of each person's self-image is also needed with regard to their market value and qualifications.

The presence of rigid structures in the workplace is also emphasised, which hinder empowerment in terms of both recruitment and career development. It is desired that employers and employees are made to see through such rigid structures in the workplace and see the value of employing people from the ethnic minorities.

The German definition adopts a perspective-from-above approach. The others (the words immigrants or ethnic groups are not mentioned in the definition) are to be helped, as they are passive and lack both knowledge and the ability to rate their qualifications in the German labour market. There is an educational attitude to 'the others'. It is society that bears the responsibility of being the active party by means of providing information, education and other measures. It is also society's responsibility to make employers and employees understand their own benefits and that there are benefits to empowerment that are not currently made use of today. The obstacles to empowerment are placed with the disempowered and in the workplace. One characteristic of the German definition is that the problem of integration is described in such a way as to give the responsibility for integration to the German state, which can take well-established measures in relation to the employees ('the others'), but lack any direct instrument to change the workplace.

Representatives from the Danish companies TDC and DSB contributed the following definition in the discussions:

> To create the right frameworks and possibilities as well as the motivation for individuals to take responsibility and work to secure personal development, career and integration in their work.

> To give people the opportunity to grow in skill and competence, possibilities and power.

In the Danish example the actors are not local governments as in Bradford, Bremen and Malmö. The actors from Copenhagen are two large companies, TDC and DSB. This colours their definition of empowerment, and the examples from the private sector are valuable contrasts to the three public sector cases. Firstly, it is clear that the company is responsible. The responsibility concerns creating frameworks, possibilities and motivation for individual development and growth for the companies' disempowered employees. Without being too precise, the responsibility is part of the definition of what is often

called the company's social responsibility. In other words, through the measures that the company undertakes the employees from ethnic minorities will be guaranteed personal development and integration in their working situation.

The Danish example departs from a philosophy of diversity management, in which empowerment measures in the recruitment and career development of the employees will also benefit the company and be manifested as, for example, improved services to customers, an improved image in society and increased profits. The utility perspective of empowerment probably demands that the selection of disempowered people is quite meticulous and that possibilities for personal development are carefully evaluated. It is likely that the "weakest of the weak" have difficulty finding employment and through that take part in the company's efforts for empowerment. The individual perspective of empowerment in the philosophy of diversity management can be combined with 'group thinking'. But, if companies only rely on the utility aspects in their staff recruitment it means that selections will be made from the largest and strongest ethnic minorities. Reasons for this are that large ethnic minorities are also large markets for companies and that selecting from larger ethnic minorities increases the chances of getting good employees with the potential for development. This naturally means that (if there are differences of size between ethnic groups and differences in ability to adjust to the company) certain ethnic minorities benefit to the detriment of other.

The Conditions of Crossing Boundaries

Empowerment requires an act of goodwill from within the boundaries of a disempowered minority/individual. If diversity is to be achieved, a similar act of goodwill is required from an empowered majority. If a minority does not wish to alter its weak position it lacks the motivation to cross its own boundaries and there is therefore no basis for empowerment. If the majority does not review its superior position critically, the insight that facilitates changes to boundaries and diversity is hindered. Without goodwill a disempowered minority nor an empowered majority cannot cross boundaries. Two separate paradigms are commonly mentioned in connection with problems of boundary crossing. One is associated with the anti-discrimination and positive discrimination of individuals on the part of minorities, and the other associated with diversity and different developmental measures taken within organisations to increase diversity (Broomé et al. 2001). Boundaries are seen as a question of structure in the discrimination-paradigm, as something that separates 'us and them' and as a construction of insiders and outsiders (Elias 1999). Social construc-

tions of majority and minority are of interest here. In our analysis of the four cases of empowerment and diversity in England, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, we would like to clarify the constructions of minority and majority and how these constructions are coloured and determined by both national and local organisational situations.

The constructions of majority and minority are structural in character and the basis for measures against discrimination in the discrimination-paradigm. Boundaries can also be seen as processes. From the process perspective it is the act of constructing, rather than the actual constructions, that is the main focus of interest. How are minority and majority, will and goodwill created? In our analysis of the four cases of empowerment and diversity in England, Denmark, Germany and Sweden, we would also like to discuss the orientation of the processes in the respective cases by starting with the structural conditions. Such an analysis focuses on the factors of change in each case. What factors drive change, how strong are they, how much attention is paid to them and how do the agents of change act?

In the structural discussion the long-term determination of organisational collectives are discussed and the importance of structure for the diffusion, shift and penetration of boundaries by majorities and minorities. In the discussion of process that follows on from that, the short-term concept of collectivity is used to discuss the content of boundary change in majority and minority perceptions of organisational membership.

The Boundaries in the Four Cases: Structural Perspective

Bradford

Bradford operates according to the principle of including prominent and suitable representatives from different ethnic collectives in the local government. It is not a matter of offering unimportant positions in the organisation, but rather the integration of vital parts and organs. It can therefore be argued that Bradford is heading towards a form of boundary diffusion, and that this has been achieved through individual penetration of the boundary between minority and majority. We argue that in Bradford there is an upward movement in the organisation by individuals from ethnic minorities. This movement means that room is made for representatives of the different ethnic groups. These representatives are not chosen according to market standards but are selected through negotiations with individuals from minority collectives. Depending on the negotiation skills and space given to the ethnic minority, such negotiations create a legitimacy of the organisation within the ethnic minority and the individual representative. The

first dimension can be referred to as communitarian, and the second dimension as individual. The communitarian conflicts between majority and minority is solved through *cooptation* (boundary diffusion), that is to say through a merger of the majority and individuals from the minority in order to increase diversity and empowerment.

In the case of Bradford it could be argued that the boundary diffusion between majority and minority has occurred in a context of opposition. By this we mean that the ideas of conflict between different collectives have strong historical roots that can, for example, be traced back to class conflict and the British Empire's colonisation of a number of countries. One aspect of colonial rule was to emphasise internal conflicts between groups (divide) and make friends among the groups (Davidson 2001). It may appear far-fetched to view Bradford's empowerment and organisation of diversity in the light of British colonial history, but there are definite connections. These connections are reflected in the strategy found in Bradford where an upwards movement is created for individuals from *dominant minority collectives* through negotiations with representatives from those ethnic minorities. The purpose is partly to pacify the population so as to avoid more riots, and partly to create a real diversity and empowerment in local government that is built on the inclusion of suitable prominent individuals from the ethnic minorities.

TDC and DSB

In order to understand Denmark's, or rather the Danish companies TDC and DSB, their work for diversity and their definitions of empowerment, it is important to take a brief look at their organisational structure and rhetoric. At the centre of these companies' definitions of empowerment is the individual from a minority group and how the companies can enable him/her to break patterns and create new ones. This, in turn, will lead to different benefits. This is a rather typical diversity management attitude toward diversity (Cox 1993).

The market and business perspective is clear, even though it is not explicitly stated in the definition. Let us take an example of the market perspective. The Danish companies work with different forms of shorter video films that are produced in cooperation with the Danish Broadcasting Company. The films are partly educational and aimed at the staff of the companies, partly to advertise and create goodwill from the surrounding society. One of the videos shows how the company TDC has started a call centre with Turkish-speaking staff for Denmark's Turkish-speaking population. In the video the company is portrayed as 'the good' company that takes care of the minorities. One of the women participating in the film had previously lived with a man that

she had been forced to marry. She was obliged to run away from her loved ones, as she could not endure such a life. Today the situation is completely different. She lives a life of freedom and has been employed by TDC in the Turkish-speaking call centre. Even if there is a business-like or market-oriented basis for both the diversity and empowerment work in the company, it is mainly discussed in terms of individuals. In the Danish version, empowerment is about motivating individuals to take advantage of good career opportunities and helping them to develop in their professional roles.

The division between individual and market as described above is also understandable via the concept of corporate social responsibility. Prioritising the company's social responsibility is important in the Danish context. With the aid of this concept we can understand the organisational boundaries that are drawn in Denmark; a drawing of boundaries that takes place at the interface between individual and market. In this context the organisational boundaries can be said to be continually moving towards new minority groups. In other words, there are no set boundaries to any specific group and boundary changes can be understood in terms of utility. Should a new group, such as the Turkish example described above, be considered useful in business terms, then the borders are flexible and changeable for individuals of the useful minority. The setting of borders, that take place through *pushing the borders* and the incorporation of useful individuals from the useful minorities, is a utilitarian change of boundaries. The purpose is to create as much utility, or profit, for the company as well as for the individual from a minority group.

Malmö

Malmö's definition of empowerment points out structures and attitudes in the organisation as something that needs adjusting in order for empowerment to function. The obstacles are mainly considered to be the structures and attitudes embedded in the local government. Unlike Denmark, individuals and companies are not mentioned, but rather employers and employees as groups. This can be interpreted as that empowerment aims to increase diversity in the organisation by employing more people from ethnic minorities and influencing those structures and attitudes that hinder this. Reasons of efficiency and ideas of rights lie behind this; it is a misuse of the city's labour resources and it is unjust to the minorities not to employ these. However, in placing all the ethnic minorities in the same category and labelling them as immigrants, ethnic differences are not recognised. Reasons of efficiency and rights are not strong enough to identify groups or individuals from

an ethnic perspective, but rather distance them by referring to them as a homogenous collective of immigrants (Ålund & Schierup 1991).

It can be argued that the differences between individuals and groups disappear with the introduction of abstract identities such as employer and employees. Collective ideas create a homogenous minority, while minority and individual variations vanish. A homogenous collective definition of minority (albeit false) fortifies the ideas of 'us and them' and the right (although morally reproachable) to construct borders based on an act of separation from the minority.

The lack of individual or emphasised organisational responsibility to strengthen and promote the possibilities available to ethnic minorities triggers an association to some type of collective negotiation on the labour market; a game played by anonymous actors. Limitations set by collective negotiation also lead to struggles between groups of differing interests, such as employers on the one hand and employees on the other, thus concealing the differences of position and power of employers and employees.

The collective stance also pushes actions relating to issues of responsibility and the construction of instruments of negotiation and compromise upwards and forwards in the organisational hierarchies. Caution and inertia are manifested in this way, although these may contribute to an increased space for empowerment for individuals and groups who both wish and are able to take part in the negotiations. The minority that is divided into different ethnic groups/individuals often finds it difficult to act and can end up in the hands of other actors in society, such as the social services, the job centre, and black market agencies and actors. The loosely associated organisation with a number of different political key players, widely different activities and organisational cultures, can make it difficult for the employer, in this case the local government, to formulate a coherent position that would pave the way for minorities to be employed in the local government.

Without over-interpretation, it is possible to discern a tradition of collective action in the labour market that is a characteristic of Sweden in the sense of Malmö's empowerment definition. The slow and often unclear and covert negotiations, as well as the need for centralist compromise between the various interests which characterise public life in Sweden, are therefore likely to determine Malmö's local government actions concerning the stance on questions of ethnicity (Daun 1996).

In the name of compromise, the differences between us and them are transformed into a classic question of negotiation between employer and employees, where the central political power (the government at national and local level) finds it difficult to influence the parties, particularly as negotiations are traditionally left to the parties involved. In

Malmö the collective stance underestimates both the minorities' local labour market problems and the need for change. Different ethnic minorities/individuals in Malmö have different needs and thus need different solutions to their employment issues. As the major employer, local government in Malmö could provide these if the structures and attitudes of the employer changed. This would seem to be a major challenge for Malmö.

The process of negotiation is slow and takes time, and while the parties are negotiating and the political powers awaiting results there is little space for differences between individuals and ethnic groups to take their place in the organisation. This principally concerns public organisations, which are strongly influenced by the culture of compromise at all levels. In these organisations, the local government of Malmö included, there is only room for differences at the periphery of the organisations where a *penetration of the organisation's boundaries* is possible. This usually exists at the bottom of the organisation's hierarchy, where compromise and integration take place between individuals rather than between collectives.

Bremen and Bremerhafen

The latter part of Bremen and Bremerhafen's definition of a "win-win situation for employers and employees by the means of seeing beyond the rigid structures in the work place" is similar to Malmö's. The same argument against collective negotiation solutions to the minority's problem of underemployment and diffusion of rigid structures in the workplace can just as well be applied to Bremen and Bremerhafen as to Malmö. Measures are centralised to the state, and the individual responsibility of both employers and employees are obscured. Differences within the minority disappear and the right to separation increases. This results in a slow integration in Bremen and Bremerhafen as well.

The first part of Bremen and Bremerhafen's definition emphasises the obligation of the minority. "The ability to play an active role in the labour market, which involves: knowledge, information, motivation, and self-confidence as well as professional qualifications." This part of the definition goes beyond the content of Malmö's definition and to a greater extent attaches direct demands on the minority. In Bremen and Bremerhafen, it is argued that underemployment is due to the lack of ability on the part of the minority to play an active role in the labour market. It is not only rigid structures in the workplace that hinder the minority, but also their inability to take active part in the labour market that is the weak point. There is a lack of knowledge, information, motivation, self-confidence, individual value and awareness

of one's personal skills and the professional qualifications needed on the labour market. The sense of separation from the minority in these statements is caused by overlooking the variation in the differences of the minorities; they are similar, but different from us. This is confirmed by the notion that the immigrant should become a proper 'Bremian' (quotation from the *Equal Conference* in Bremen, 2004). The reality is that in the aspects contained in the definition the differences in the abilities of ethnic minorities in Bremen and Bremerhafen are remarkable.

It is possible to interpret the first definition as though responsibility for the minority's weak position on the labour market is their own; they have shortcomings that only they can be blamed for. But the stance of Bremen and Bremerhafen is not that well circumscribed. Instead there is also a demand for a responsibility that is aimed upwards, toward the city and the city's central actors; for help in handling the characteristics of the minority as pointed out in the definition. This stance includes an educational attitude on the part of the majority as well as a utility perspective. The minority's professional status in a situation of high unemployment and welfare dependency is not an efficient issue for society to grapple with because it depletes the common resources. The question of ethnic minorities is therefore moved up towards more central collective solutions and time consuming measures aimed towards the minority as a collective. The lack of accountability of individuals in the form of employers and employees to directly solve the problems of ethnic diversity permeates the definition and, in Bremen and Bremerhafen, leads to a slow integration. As in Malmö, inertia rules in Bremen and Bremerhafen in the area of integration. While the central power bides its time or takes steps to remedy the minority's inability, little space is given for professional differences to exist in the organisations. During this time there is only room for differences in the periphery of the organisation's hierarchy by *penetration of the organisation's boundaries*, where compromise and integration takes place between individuals, not collectives.

Collectivity and Individuality: Interpretations of the Concepts of Diversity and Empowerment from a Perspective of Process

As previously argued, the concept of collectivity may be defined as a multifaceted and organic unit of process that is created at a meso-level between micro concepts such as team, group, work team, and macro concepts such as class, nation, gender, ethnicity, profession, or large formal organisations. The members have personal contacts and experiences of the collective and, in an interplay between these,

an individuality is shaped that is both fleeting and changeable. Thus, organisations can be seen as arenas in which experiences of individuality and collectivity characterise the experiences of life in an organisation.

Organisations and collectivity in organisations are, however, embedded in larger and more encompassing socio-cultural collectives, such as national collectives. The national collectives have developed as a result of various historical, social and cultural factors that have established long-term boundaries between classes, genders, ethnicities, professions, private and public etc. In this context individuality means a lifelong process of experiences of the particular national collective identity, its social patterns and cultural characteristics.

In professional life and the organised world of companies, organisations, workplaces and environments, a less historically determined and stable collectivity rules so that one may speak of a temporary, fleeting and unstable collectivity and individuality. Processes reshape the boundaries of the collectivity. The processes consist of changes in the membership, of diverse experiences and the experiences of differences between individuals in a social and cultural sense. Individuality determines the space for individual differences and the boundaries of difference. Experiences of this are direct and immediate and manifested by reactions of personal diversity.

From the perspective of immigration and integration, the structural and process perspective of the concept of collectivity seem to be separate phenomena. From the individuality perspective, the integration of an immigrant that has been socialised in a different national collective is markedly greater in the 'small' collectivity, at the meso-level, with its more fleeting and short-term changeability. The collectivity that determines the character of the membership in an interaction with individuality can, in the eight dimensions suggested earlier, seem like an obstacle to integration. One reason is that the 'small' collectivity is based on socio-cultural factors of belonging in a national context, which can contain exogenously determined and structural ideas that affect integration. Another reason is that in one or several dimensions the small collectivity means a more closely-knit collectivity with endogenously determined ideas that are significant to individuality.

As discussed in this article, the concept of empowerment can not only be seen as an individual or collective structural issue, but also as a question of individuality and collectivity from a perspective of process. Thus, empowerment is not about an individual that is discriminated against or a disempowered collective from the perspective of process, but is concerned with inclusive and excluding occurrences and ideas,

both socially and culturally, in the arenas of collectivity that make up organisations. Such collective ideas can be obstacles to certain differences, irrespective of whether they exclude or include the individual in the organisation.

Clearly, it is difficult to state how diversity as a policy or management concept affects respective organisation in the four transnational partnerships from a perspective of process. That would require completely different empirical data to that we have access to. Furthermore, the research results are not particularly clear. One discussion deals with the possibilities and risks connected with diversity, but yields no direct answers to the question (Broomé et al. 2001). Another discussion concerns the dilemmas that diversity policies pose for organisations from a number of organisational perspectives (Prasad & Mills 1997, Prasad & Prasad 2004). According to Wrench (2003), a third way is to ask the question of whether diversity management clears away previous shortcomings of organisations in the form of assimilation training, limited cultural space, racist attitudes, discrimination, and different possibilities for employment and career depending on ethnic or other differences in relation to the majority. It is possible to point out that the structural traits discussed play a part in the integration of people from ethnic minorities. In Bradford, cooperation with the largest ethnic minority created space for border diffusion, while in Bremen and Bremerhafen the main possibilities include penetrating the organisation's boundaries. In Malmö and TDC and DSB, the organisational utility leads to border shifts in relation to large minorities. But what happens with individuality and collectivity in the respective organisations is difficult to predict without more in-depth studies of the process of inclusive and excluding events in the organisation's character of collectivity and individuality. However, some hypothetical arguments can be put forward relating to what is meant by the collectivity in an organisation being 'framed' and limited by bonds to a larger social unit, such as the national one.

Bradford Revisited

Bradford's definition of empowerment hints at a view of integration that is processual and boundary diffusing. It is emphasised that questions that affect the recipients will be initiated and revised. The meaning of these questions can be such things that affect the collectivity of companies and authorities, that is to say, how a 'we' is constructed in the singular organisation. Another interpretation could be that the questions also affect the recipients' individuality, for example the ideas and the experiences of membership in the organisation. A third inter-

pretation is that the recipient denotes ethnic minorities as collectives, and the intention is to change the ideas in the organisation of the ethnic minorities as collectives and hereby individual's actual space; the space for differences within companies and authorities.

In the second part of Bradford's definition it is emphasised that initiatives will come from the recipients themselves, both with regard to solutions and the delivery of these solutions. Strong ethnic minorities and strong individuals should be able to live up to such a view of empowerment, and in Bradford there is such an ethnic minority, the Pakistani minority, which has the strength and will to integrate. Bearing in mind our view of organisations as arenas for the many-faceted and fleeting collectivity, goodwill in the arena of the organisation cannot be taken for granted. Britain's heritage of post-colonialism and class society lingers in the collective 'we's' that are (re) constructed in companies and authorities. The encounter, both in society and in professional life, must necessarily be between the experiences, ideas and behaviour of the collectives of the organisations and the collectives of the ethnic minorities. This puts socio-cultural limitations on the development of multifaceted individuality in the organisations. Collectivity is affected by its national framework and affects the experiences and views of the belonging/membership, which in turn defines the collectivity and determines the nature of individuality.

Malmö Revisited

Employers and employees are mentioned in Malmö's definition, although it is obvious that employers, companies and authorities are organisations consisting of processes of collectivity and individuality, whereas employees are individuals. Even if the collectivity can be influenced towards a greater openness for individual dissimilarities, the individual is forced to adjust to an acceptable individuality prior to attaining membership of the organisation: "People may be linked up to or be linked up with collectives as a focused object of control, which is quite different from assuming the existence of a community (or any other social unit)" (Alvesson & Kärreman 2003:14). The Swedish *folkhem's*[3] collectivity builds on the existence of strong collectives and networks on the labour market, and that the individual belongs to, or acts within, these collectives or networks and, furthermore, has a (pre)individuality that benefits from this belonging. As an immigrant to Sweden and Malmö the possibility of shaping such individuality appears limited and completely dependant on ideas of the professional collectivity in Sweden that one has little or no experience of. The lack

of bonds to strong ethnic minority collectives in Malmö/Sweden gives individuals from ethnic minorities the freedom to shape individualities, although the lack of experience of belonging to a Swedish collective transforms the possibility of success to a difficult and slow adjustment to the professional collectivities.

Furthermore, there is a realisation of mutuality between employers and employees in Malmö's definition; it concerns a change in structures and attitudes on the part of organisations, which can be interpreted as having a processual perspective on the interplay between collective and individual. However, the separation from minorities as active collectives in the Swedish environment does not aid integration in a co-actor role or in the shaping of the collectivities of the organisations. A statement is lacking, as in Bradford's definition, of who has the right of interpretation regarding measures/solutions in the interplay, which indirectly gives the majority the power over integration. In addition, the lack of clarity also renders the individual inferior in the interplay with the collectivities of the organisations. This inferior position is probably what empowerment is all about, and that Malmö's definition has no answer to (cf Sicakkan 2003).

Bremen and Bremerhafen Revisited

Like that of Malmö, Bremen and Bremerhafen's definition points to rigid structures, especially on the labour market. It can be argued that by seeing beyond these structures both employers and employees can create a win-win situation. To "see beyond" hints that it is possible to disregard the organisational collectivities that hinder immigrants and minorities in their pursuit of employment and a professional career. However, the collectivity cannot be disregarded if it is a crucial phenomenon, as it regulates membership and delineates inclusion and exclusion. By means of its phrasing of the concept of empowerment, Bremen and Bremerhafen probably underestimate the difficulties inherent in the existing socio-cultural structures that influence and limit the integration capacity of a collectivity. Another weakness in the Bremen definition is that use of the words "see beyond" hardly emphasises responsibility for the causes of the creation of an excluding collectivity and how a long-term change of the said collectivity might be achieved. This is hinted at in Bremen's definition of empowerment, however. It states that the individuality of the immigrants has to be changed in order to 'take an active part in the labour market. (Pre)individuality must be changed in a number of ways with regard to knowledge, self-confidence and an awareness of one's own ability. The alienation of the individual is something that is counteracted with education and discipline outside the workplace, and not in any

interplay between individuality and collectivity within the workplace. An ambition is discernible behind the definition that shapes one, mainly through public measures, for professional life and individuality; an ambition that ignores the processes that create collectivity and individuality in organisations. Empowerment becomes a set of external assimilation measures aimed toward immigrants and minorities for entrance to and participation in the professional life of Bremen.

TDC and DSB Revisited

Danish TDC and DSB's definitions focus strongly on the individual. They are concerned with giving the individual a framework, possibilities and responsibilities to grow in competence. It is the company's social responsibility to ensure that the individual is profitable through individual development. Without personal development it can be assumed that the company will not profit from hiring the individual. A redeeming feature of the Danish definition is that it is the company that must provide the frameworks, the possibilities, and thus employ the individuals, even if they are initially unprofitable and have less suitable (pre)individualities characterised by minority belonging. The shaping of a profitable individuality in the company is also an issue for the individual. It is not evident that the mere possibility for personal development automatically changes the individuality of the company. The individual must, according to the definition, also take responsibility and act to ensure their own personal development, career enhancement and integration in their work. Empowerment is here tied to the company's ability to be profitable. The selection of individuals is controlled by their utility in the company, for example the utility of reaching new groups of customers or increasing the knowledge of the market. Empowerment is limited to the business utility of ethnic minorities as clients, markets or resources, and a creation of individuality that uses ethnic diversity for the purpose of profit. Not much is said in reference of the organisation's changeable collectivity, or mutual adjustment in a socio-cultural process. It is argued that the proper framework for development of the individual must be created, but 'frameworks' do not connote a processual mutuality. It is mainly about creating an organisational competence for an expansion of the market, where the immigrant's dissimilarities are adjusted to the given collectivity through personal development.

Conditions of a Diversity-oriented Collectivity Construction in the Four Cases

Although we do not have much data from inside the organisations that would serve in an analysis of the construction processes of collectivity, it is possible to deduct some challenges of social and cultural integration in all four of our cases. The challenges can be deducted from the way the organisations choose to integrate minorities through different boundary changes between the organisation and the minority environment and the risks they run in boundary management.

The Concept of Common Ground[4]

It is obvious that there are differences between the four cases regarding the hierarchical space that ethnic minorities occupy in the organisation. This is due to the organisations' boundary management; at the periphery of the organisation through penetration of the boundary (Bremen, Malmö), in the whole organisation through co-optation (Bradford) and segmented based on market considerations through an enlargement of the boundary (TDC and DSB). The result is the structural, spatial and social differentiation of the common ground of the organisation in question.

Common ground is, however, not only about structural and spatial control of the organisation. A second perspective of common ground is its meaning of a value platform from which organisational actors can perform; a "constitution" that denounces the accepted rules of the game. Loden and Rosener (1994) argue: "with a common ground we refer to a by all members accepted set of assumptions that constitutes the ground for all cooperation in the organization." And they state: "In the future when organizations have a more diverse staff, the common ground will be more vital for organization efficiency. Everything points to that without generally accepted principles governing the behaviour of employees diversity can be an unruly and dividing force." This sounds reasonable, but there are of course complications and dilemmas in the value platform statement. If a group of people agree on a "constitution" and then other individuals want to join, but do not share the assumptions of the constitution, there are only two ways out of the dilemma: to stop the entrance or renegotiate the constitution. In the former case any development towards diversity ends, whereas in the later case you can suspect a gradual weakening of the content of the constitution. This is the problem that is central to an integration of ethnic diversity and it directs our interest to the field of negotiating, or rather of renegotiating, the common grounds of the organisation.

Collectivity processes are at work at the intersection between the

"social" and the "cultural" aspects of organisations. Collectivity is the real thing in constructing a common value ground, it is formally constructed by members of the organisation in personal meetings and results in an informal contract process of social and cultural content. This is where renegotiating takes place. The presence of people from ethnic minorities in the collectivity building process is vital for a valid content of the formal value platform, as it connects informal value construction and social behaviour rules to the overall organisation where the constitution is formalised.

The Cases

Bradford's main approach to integration in local government is co-optation at political and administrative levels of the English majority and the ethnic minorities. You could say that a hierarchical common ground is created for the processes of integration, namely, a new collectivity. Operating on a social common ground with increasing differences, the approach runs the risk of cultural clashes, disempowering rites of initiation and stress for ethnic minority individuals, and diminishing trust in the organisation due to an increase in social and ethnic differences between organisational members. Local government has established features of parallel hierarchies for the majority and for the ethnic minorities when it comes to integration matters. This organisational division leads to the risk of an ethnic segmentation of the organisation. Overcoming those risks and creating a collectivity in congruence with the actual diversity of the organisation are the most likely challenges for managing diversity and empowerment in local government in Bradford.

Malmö"s main approach to integration seems to be up to the individual through penetration of the organisation boundary. For ethnic minority people this is most likely to be in the periphery of the organisation. The goal of quantitative integration of ethnic minorities in local government in Malmö is, by and large, considered to have been satisfied in this way. The hierarchical common ground is restricted to the periphery of the organisation and involves limiting personal encounters between organisation members of a different ethnicity. Collectivity construction therefore differs widely and varies in the organisation between the central parts and the periphery where individuals from the ethnic minorities are employed. This separation of hierarchical grounds for integration in the organisation seems to reflect the city's segregation and social ethnic layers. It is therefore also a ground for the continuous reproduction of ethnocentrism and stereotyping ethnicity in the organisation. Learning about social and ethnic

cultural differences through communication between individuals becomes limited to the periphery. The local government in Malmö thus runs thus the risk of a limited social and cultural learning that reproduces the ethnic stereotypes and ethnic layers found in the city. Creating a hierarchical common ground that includes ethnic minorities as well as the ethnic majority seems to be the main challenge of Malmö's local government.

Bremen's main approach to integration seems to be based on the education of and provision of information to ethnic minorities and employers outside the organisation. Since integration of ethnic minorities in the organisation is restricted to the periphery, the impact of collectivity building from a common ground of values is limited. The common value ground of integration measures is not negotiated with immigrants and ethnic minorities as there are only very limited hierarchical and social grounds for that (one might even say that there aren't any when one considers that ethnic minority employees are not regarded as negotiating members of the organisation). This means that the possibilities of diversity, or the risks associated with diversity and empowerment, are interpreted from the point of the German/Bremian majority. Such values most likely build on the preconceptions, stereotypes and rhetoric of differences between the German majority and ethnic minorities. Overcoming this one-sided value basis of integration seems to be both a dilemma and challenge to local government in Bremen.

The Danish companies' approach to diversity and empowerment seems to reflect that of the diversity management textbook and the idea that "diversity pays". It is thus based on the possible gain of employing individuals from ethnic minorities, for instance gaining increased market knowledge and contact with ethnic minority markets and providing a better service to those markets. This means pushing the boundaries of the organisation to incorporate ethnic minorities into the organisation. As the link to ethnic markets is a strong motive for the companies, the organisation runs the risk of ethnic segmentation with links to the markets. The hierarchical ground for collectivity building becomes restricted to segments of ethnic homogeny and a limited space for negotiating common values between people from different ethnicities. The ethnic minority segments probably need to adapt to majority segment common values and to the condition of "diversity pays". A dilemma arises if the companies' ethnic projects do not "pay off".

Concluding Reflections

In this article we have attempted to show that the analysed organisations' definitions of empowerment and ideas of diversity differ in many respects. In our interpretation the organisations are, to a large extent, influenced by national contexts. National long-term structural collective ideas explain some of differences shown in the article. In each respective organisation's definition of empowerment attention is thus drawn to the nation-influenced structures in the organisations and workplaces as an obstacle to diversity and empowerment. We also emphasise a processual, short-term and changeable perspective of organisations and thus draw attention to the processual meaning of increased diversity measures. We do not have sufficient empirical data to make a satisfying analysis of the collectivity and individuality of the organisations in question. But the short-term processual perspective throws some light on the kind of measures for increased diversity, how they are implemented in different organisations, and how in the long-run such measures affect individuality and collectivity in the organisation. There is, for example, quite a difference in a measure that purports to recruit a certain percentage of managers with different ethnic backgrounds and one that strives for a collectivity which means that members of the organisation feel proud of their diversity and that it is meaningful to be a part of an organisation in which the staff's diverse ethnic background is a characteristic.

We have pointed out that collectivity is essential to the construction of common organisational values that are negotiated and constructed by formal members of the organisation in personal encounters and that result in an informal contract process of social and cultural content. The presence of ethnic minority individuals in the collectivity building process is vital for a valid content of the formal value platform because this connects informal value construction and social behavioural rules to the overall organisation where the common value ground is formalised. The four cases also differ in this respect and not only in statements of what empowerment is, means or does.

As we initially mentioned, Wrench (2003) poses the question of whether there is a universal chain of events concerning measures for diversity, or whether different countries' organisations follow separate trajectories to an increased diversity. It can be concluded that the long-term structural perspective of organisations points to different paths in this development, as the national contexts bind organisational development.

The processual perspective, however, points to a space for similarity in organisational development, as organisational collectivity is short-term, changeable and guided by pragmatic day-to-day communi-

cation and problem solving. As ethnic diversity increases in the labour force and within organisations in Europe, the need for managing the organisation's day-to-day problems increases. This means that universal ideas of management, such as Diversity Management, spread and are imitated and transform measures of empowerment and integration towards similarity or isoformism in organisations (cf DiMaggio and Powell 1983). As a tool for handling globalisation and migration at the organisational level, Diversity Management stands out as the only possibility, even though criticism of the concept questions its actual success. Besides the spreading of the new professional management paradigm and the imitative way the concept of Diversity Management is used, the concept has gained support at political level, from the EU, for instance in "The joint initiative for Equal 2000-2006". With regard to the concept of collectivity, independence from national influences can thus be used to build collectivity and individuality in accordance with the universal ideas of the concept of Diversity Management. The efforts of Danish companies TDC and DSB to implement diversity management ideas in their respective organisations, contrary to the ambivalence towards ethnic diversity at national level, is an example of this.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

NOTES

[1]   The concept of local government includes all organisations and employees governed by city councils.

[2]   The discussion on empowerment comes from a paper written by Broomé et al. (2003).

[3]   Translator's note: 'folkhem' is the equivalent of the Swedish Welfare State or the Swedish model.

[4]   Here thanks are due to Professor Don DeVoretz, who proposed the concept of *common ground* when this paper was presented at the Metropolis Conference (Geneva, 27th September - 1st October 2004), at the workshop "Gateways of Migration – Economic and Sociological Perspectives on Immigrant Integration in Sweden and Canada".

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ORGANISATIONER SOM INKÖRSPORTAR FÖR INVANDRARE OCH ETNISKA MINORITETER

Sammanfattning

I denna artikel studeras hur olika organisationer, med olika huvudmän (offentliga och privata organisationer) i fyra olika nationella kontexter uppfattar och tolkar viktiga aktuella begrepp såsom *empowerment* och mångfald. De studerade organisationerna är Malmö stad, Bradford kommun, den tyska delstaten Bremen-Bremenhafven och slutligen två danska företag TDC och DSB. Dessa organisationer har under ett antal år haft ett samarbete avseende mångfaldsprojekt som delfinansierats av EU:s (Europeiska Socialfonden) *Equalprogram* för motverkande av diskriminering. Denna studie syftar till att undersöka hur *empowerment* och mångfald tolkas av de i studien ingående organisationerna och att analysera skillnaderna mellan de olika tolkningarna och deras konsekvenser.

Offentliga organisationer som exempelvis kommuner, men även privata organisationer, kan förstås som kanaler eller inkörsportar för invandrare till "det nya landet". I denna artikel diskuteras det sätt varpå offentliga och privata organisationer använder olika "kanalrelaterade" begrepp såsom *empowerment* och mångfald och hur organisationernas olika tolkningar av dessa begrepp inverkar på deras handlingar. Dessa olika tolkningar är av stort intresse och relevans. Å ena sidan kan de olika tolkningarna av begreppen enbart sättas i samband med inkludering av invandrare och minoriteter och å andra sidan har tolkningarna också att göra med organisationens självförståelse och de mönster och modeller som de också skapar. I artikeln diskuteras begreppens inkluderande funktion, men framförallt berörs organisationernas självbilder.

På en nationell politisk nivå i olika EU-länder kan retoriken som omgärdar jämlikhet och mångfald sägas vara tydlig och mer eller mindre likriktad, vilket också är ett faktum för kommuner, regioner, men också för företag och andra offentliga organisationer runt om i EU. Detta är också ett faktum för de studerade organisationerna, med ett eventuellt frågetecken för de danska aktörerna. Men om fokus

flyttas från den politiska och/eller organisatoriska retoriken till en reell nivå uppvisas en annan bild. I studien påvisas att på denna reella nivå varierar tolkningarna av begreppen *empowerment*, mångfald och integration mellan de olika ländernas organisatoriska aktörer. Dessa skillnader orsakas bland annat av nationella olikheter som exempelvis immigrationshistoria, storleken och kompositionen av den invandrade befolkningen. Men även institutionella regler skiftar mellan länderna och den organisatoriska definitionen av *empowerment* och integration på en lokal nivå verkar till stor del definieras just av de nationella institutionella villkoren. De nationella institutionella villkorens bindande påverkan på den lokala organisatoriska nivån är observerade på många olika sätt, exempelvis:

- som fyra olika organisatoriska definitioner av *empowerment* och mångfald
- i de olika slutgiltiga definitionerna av integrationens mål och syfte i de fyra olika organisationerna
- i skapandet av meningen med integration i de fyra organisationerna
- i olikheter beträffande bruket av mångfaldssymboler och ritualer som en möjlig väg till ökad *empowerment* och organisatorisk integration i de olika studerade organisationerna.

Utifrån jämförelsen mellan organisationerna i artikeln framstår det som uppenbart att det finns olikheter i de fyra studerade fallen. Framförallt avseende det hierarkiska utrymmet som etniska minoriteter har i organisationerna. Sådant utrymme varierar för invandrare och minoriteter i de olika organisationerna. Detta har framförallt att göra med de gränser som chefs- och ledarskapet skapar i organisationerna.

I fallen Bremen och Malmö handlar detta om att etniska minoriteter snarast återfinns i den organisatoriska periferin genom gränspenetration.

I fallet Bradford är situationen annorlunda och vi kan finna etniska minoriteter i hela organisationen vilket har sin orsak i kooptering.

I det danska fallet uppstår en form av etnisk segmentering som har sin grund i marknadsmässiga överväganden och resulterande utvidgning av de organisatoriska gränserna.

På det hela taget är resultatet skilda strukturella, rumsliga och sociala differentieringar av etnisk mångfald i organisationerna trots ett överordnat likartat synsätt beträffande mångfald och *empowerment* på den politisk-retoriska nivån.

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