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# On relationship quality and ethical issues at work: navigating between care and instrumentality

by

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the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## Declaration

This thesis is the personal work of Anne Antoni. The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the degree of PhD in Management at the University of Warwick. The thesis has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

## Abstract

Good relationships at work are thought to enhance various symbolic and material benefits, such as well-being, assistance on the job, and other resources. However, more research is needed to understand the intricacies between the quality of work relationships and organisational context. Therefore, this thesis adopts a social constructionist view to explore how people construct a quality of relationships at work. Moreover, to examine how people make sense of a 'good' way to behave with each other at work, this study investigates the construction of ethical issues at work. While research on ethical behaviours highlighted the role of intuitive processes, more research is needed to understand how these intuitive processes play a role in the construction of ethical awareness. The quality of work relationships is a quotidian phenomenon and has an ambiguous ethical meaning. Hence, work relationships is a way to study of the construction of ethicality in work organisations.

A naturalistic multiple case study is adopted to investigate the phenomenon of work relationships in context. The researcher conducted in-depth qualitative inductive studies in two work organisations in France, including observations (330 hours of nonparticipant observations, 14 hours of audio and video recordings), interviews (45 participants), and questionnaires (N=106). Data was analysed separately, then compared in order to build theory on the construction of the quality of work relationships and underlying ethical issues.

Findings show that relationships at work are a site of conflicting responsibilities: to care for work and to care for co-workers. The ethical meaning that people ascribe to the quality of work relationships is primarily related to individuals' responsibility for the work, trumping a responsibility for co-workers. However, the salience of personal life at work increases the tension felt between caring for work and caring for co-workers. This tension can be rationalised into the belief that both caring obligations are complementary instead of competitive. This research shows that affects play a critical role in the issue construction phase and evidences the role of implicit processes at the collective level.

The thesis contributes to research on work relationships in three ways. Firstly, this study demonstrates that the organisational context shapes the quality of work relationships, which reside in the interplay between care and instrumentality. Secondly, previous research was fragmented on the definition of work relationships, thus this research presents a typology of good relationships at work with an empirical definition. Thirdly, this study draws on an ethics of care to add to understanding care in organisations by showing how workplace instrumentality hinders the possibilities to care for co-workers. Thus, the thesis critically considers the role of work organisations on social welfare.

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# CHAPTER 1- Introduction

'Man is by nature a social animal' (Aristotle)

We are connected. As human beings we need connections with others to feel, to enjoy, to sustain ourselves. We exist through our connections to others. This materialises in intimate relationships such as families but also in impersonal relationships. We even feel a connection to strangers if only for the sake of being in the physical presence of others, as the crowd phenomenon demonstrates. Hence, what about the intermediate other that is neither intimate to us nor is a stranger, such as a co-worker? People spend much time together at work; they are acquainted with each other and can sometimes even become friends. However, relationships at work can be the source of immense suffering, through active bullying or passive negligence. This research aims at better understanding the nature of work relationships and especially at unveiling how they are shaped by organisational processes.

The research question that is at the core of this PhD research stems from a practical concern. This practical concern has puzzled me since my working life experience prior to taking up my doctoral studies. I worked in organisations where people were caring towards each other and in others where they were not even respectful. In each of these organisations, the specific way of interacting was regarded as self-evident by the people in the organisation. People did not explain why they behaved in one way or another, it was just the way things were done. To address this concern through academic research, I ask, broadly: What shapes relationship quality in the workplace? What makes co-workers act in caring ways towards each other?

## **Why is this study important?**

Answering this question is important at two levels. First, this question is important for the quality of life at work. As Ragins and Dutton (2007) state in their book on positive relationships at work, relationships are the very essence of life quality, and work relationships stand for a significant part of them. Relationships enable social support, which has empirically been designated as a significant factor determining the level of job strain (Karasek, 1979). In essence, having good relationships with people at work will make the workplace experience more positive.

Second, understanding why people at work enact a certain level of relationship quality is also important to understand ethicality in organisational life. It is part of the common sense morality that we need to treat people well, to be respectful, helpful, and even caring with the people we know. However, the common-sense morality does not necessarily apply within organisations. For instance, it has been shown that the rule of reciprocity does not apply at work (Belmi and Pfeffer, 2015). It appears that the moral duty that ties us to reciprocate any benefit that has been extended to us individually (Cialdini, 2009) does not apply in the work context. The workplace can engineer its moral microcosm (Jackall, 1988). Framing an issue as a business one leads to decreased compassion (Molinsky, *et al.*, 2012) and cooperation (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 1999), and increased occurrences of unethical behaviours such as cheating at tests (Kouchaki, *et al.*, 2013).

A better understanding of how morality is constructed in the workplace enhances the contribution of organisations to society. Bell and Wray-Bliss (2009) have forcefully coined the motivation that underpins this research: 'At a time when the reach, power, and complexity of organisations risks outpacing our traditional processes of democratic accountability, intellectual comprehension, and moral imagination, understanding organisation is, we would argue, fundamental to wellbeing and survival' (p.82).

## **Proposed theoretical framework**

This research builds on bodies of scholarship on relationships at work and construction of ethical issues at work. A large part of research on work relationships adopts a social exchange perspective (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano

and Mitchell, 2005) and defines the quality of relationships through the benefits that can be obtained for oneself (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009; Gittell and Douglass, 2012; Creary, *et al.*, 2015). On the contrary, research on high-quality relationships focuses on the positive experience of the relationship itself (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Ragins and Dutton, 2007; Kark, 2011). These different streams of research have been concerned about how to foster high-quality relationships at work (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). I confront these different views and ask: *How is the quality of relationships shaped in the organisational context?* To unveil the underlying processes to the quality of relationships at work, I draw on research on the construction of ethical issues at work.

While initial models of ethical behaviours were focusing on factors influencing the decision making towards ethicality or unethicity (Rest, 1986; Trevino, 1986; Jones, 1991), later on, these models have been criticised for their rationalist stance (Sonenshein, 2007; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). This research is based on these critics and endeavours to advance our understanding of what allows flagging the ethicality of an issue in the first place. Concepts to describe the distancing of individuals towards ethicality of an issue have flourished under terms such as moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999), ethical fading (Tenbrunsel, *et al.*, 2010), moral blindness (Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012), or moral rationalisation (de Klerk, 2017). However, most of the research effort devoted to develop and refine this phenomenon has been either conceptual or based on experimental methods (Bartels, *et al.*, 2014; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). On the contrary, this research adopts a holistic naturalistic method that allows for 'uncovering the subtlety and complexity of our everyday moral psychology' (Bartels, *et al.*, 2014, p.25). Moreover, this research does not adopt a normative approach of what is ethical but rather empirically captures how ethicality is constructed in the workplace. Through the case of relationships at work, I aim at unveiling the process through which a mundane issue could be constructed as ethical or not. Thus, the second research question that this research addresses is: *How do people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work?*

This research provides an analysis of everyday behaviours at work for which ethical awareness is contingent upon the way the issue is constructed. In

particular, it shows how affective and intuitive processes interact with reflective processes to make sense of the ethicality of an issue (Haidt, 2001; Dane and Pratt, 2007; Sonenshein, 2007). While it had been conceptually established that both intuitive and reflective processes play a role in the construction of ethical issues at work (Sonenshein, 2007), the underlying processes have yet to be unveiled.

### **Methodological approach**

This research adopts an inductive approach of two in-depth case studies. I do not claim to follow a pure grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) in the sense that I had a theoretical framework in mind before starting fieldwork. However, this study is inductive in the sense that it builds theory from data (Eisenhardt, *et al.*, 2016). The quality of relationships at work is seen in this research as socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1971) and the epistemological framework adopted here is mostly interpretative (Yanow and Ybema, 2009), the researcher being considered a subjective measurement tool.

Two work organisations have been studied: a communication agency in Paris that I call Comms, and a children protection service in a small town in France that I call Serv. Case studies are particularly suitable to answer 'how' types of questions (Yin, 2014). The two cases allowed gathering empirical material on a large range of situations, events, activities, and persons. I spent 340 hours in observations, including 14 hours recording meetings (video and audio) yielding 290 pages of field and video notes. I also conducted 45 interviews, fully transcribed (more than 800 pages), and collected 140 questionnaires from a web survey.

The analysis has been conducted through different rounds in iteration with reviews of the literature. The empirical material has first been openly coded, and second, from 'discoveries' (Alvesson and Kaerremann, 2007) in the analysis, specific themes have been more intensely researched in the data. These specific themes emerged while contrasting and comparing observations in Comms and Serv cases (Yin, 2014) and were selected according to their potential for theoretical contribution as revealed by the iterative literature review (Davis, 1971; Walsh, *et al.*, 2015). Finally, the findings have been

written to account for the theorisation that had been built from the data (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007).

### **Summary of findings**

Findings indicate that the quality of work relationships is constructed as the right balance between caring for the work and caring for the other person. A typology of relationships has been created from these empirical investigations. It reveals that people consider that good relationships at work can comprise courteous interactions, convivial relationships, supportive relationships, and friendships. These four types of relationships achieve different performance regarding care for the work and care for the other person at work. The most performant relationships to take care of the work, to enhance work, are convivial relationships and supportive relationships. However, the latter type is also geared towards care for the worker, which can lead to conflicting responsibilities. Courteous interactions are considered the minimum level of performance required to take care of the work and also represent a low level of care for the person. Finally, friendships are seen as the optimal relationships to care for the other person but not for the work. Each of these types of work relationships can be considered ideal in a specific work organisation, but it is expected that convivial relationships be considered the ideal-type of good work relationships.

These types of relationships and the emphasis on the ideal one, are constructed in the interplay between organisational and personal considerations, between instrumentality and care. An emphasis on organisational objectives led to increase the consideration for the work, and to use people instrumentally for work purpose. An emphasis on personal stakes led to increase the consideration for the person at work, and to focus on the relationship for itself. The emphasis on organisational objectives was observable through the importance of the mission (pressure on satisfying the client, distress from failing a social mission) and the importance of individual performance (pressure on individual evaluation). The emphasis on personal objectives was observable through the consideration of the worker as a whole person (as opposed to a worker only). These two emphases were competing for

attention, and this competition could result in experiencing an ethical dilemma.

Importantly, findings show that relationships at work are the site of conflicting responsibilities: between caring for the work and caring for the other person. This tension is constructed as an ethical issue under certain conditions. I find that the conflict is constructed as an ethical issue when people connect at a personal level, and not only at a professional level. This degree of closeness in relationships entails the consideration of the worker as a whole person. On the contrary, the tension between caring for the worker and caring for the other person at work does not emerge when the worker is considered as a worker only. In this latter case, only an instrumental view of the relationship emerges. The analysis of underlying processes reveal that individuals conform to collective behaviours and subsequently either make sense of the conflict, which creates a moral tension, or rationalise this tension and feel no moral tension.

## **Contributions**

This research contributes to two bodies of knowledge – relationships at work and the construction of ethical issues – and to reflections for the societal responsibility of organisations.

First, this research contributes to research on relationships at work. It provides a platform for collaboration for different bodies of scholarship on relationships at work, such as positive relationships at work (e.g. Dutton and Ragins, 2007), social networks (e.g. Kilduff and Brass, 2010) or leader-member exchanges (e.g. Schermuly and Meyer, 2016). Whereas these different fields are mainly fragmented, underpinned by different understandings of their objects of study, the typology of relationships at work that I develop from this research proposes a reference point for these different streams that should facilitate future conversations. Moreover, this research provides substance to the claims that the context conditions the quality of relationships at work (Kahn, 1993; Stephens, *et al.*, 2011; Simpson, *et al.*, 2015). It shows how work in organisations provides the underlying frame that conditions how people determine what ought to be indicative of relationships at work. Finally, by highlighting the conflict in responsibilities between caring for the work and

caring for the person at work, this research contributes to research on care in organisations (Liedtka, 1996; Rynes, *et al.*, 2012). It casts doubt on the possibility to care for each other while in organisational roles (Gittell and Douglass, 2012).

Second, this research contributes to research on ethical issues in organisations. Recent calls have been made to better understand how people in organisations come to be aware of ethical issues (Sonenshein, 2007; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). With the case of relationships at work, this research shows how the ethical issue of care for the other person at work (co-worker, manager, subordinate) is constructed in the workplace. It contributes to research that highlights the role of affective processes in ethical behaviours (Haidt, 2001; Sonenshein, 2007; Teper, *et al.*, 2011; Fotaki and Hyde, 2015; de Klerk, 2017) by showing that affects determine ethical (un)awareness. It also contributes to research on ethical sensemaking (Sonenshein, 2007; Reinecke and Ansari, 2015) by showing that the collective dimension in processes of ethical sensemaking does not only happen through conscious deliberations but also through implicitly shared understandings. This research showcases the value of unveiling processes of ethical (un)awareness to understand the phenomenon of ethical framing (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 1999; Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012)

Finally, this research allows raising broader questions about the construction of meaning in organisations and the implications for business ethics and the role of organisations in society. Findings about the specificities of the workplace morality lead me to discuss the need for reconsidering the societal impact of organisations (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Djelic, 2013; Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). I conclude by providing reflections for how research in management can contribute to social welfare (Walsh, *et al.*, 2003; Fotaki and Prasad, 2014) and in particular to implementing an ethic of care in practice (Tronto, 1993).

### **Organisation of the document**

The piece of research presented here has a double meaning. First and foremost, it is a research project on how the quality of relationships is shaped in work organisations and on the construction of ethical issues at work. As

such, it needs to follow the rules of how to report academic research, especially in the field of organisation studies. Hence, this document will consist in an orderly exposé of the theoretical and empirical elements that allow claiming for a theoretical contribution in organisation studies (see Figure 1). After this introduction (Chapter 1), the literature that has been selected and analysed to inform the research question will be presented (Chapter 2). Chapter 3 will present the empirical methodology that has been applied, and thus constitutes the turn from conceptual to empirical activities. It will first describe the chosen research design addressing methodological challenges that pertain to the study of the processes underpinning the construction of the quality of relationships at work. It will then give an account of fieldwork, i.e. the research setting, the data collection and analysis. Three chapters will then be dedicated to presenting the empirical findings: an ethnographic account of how the quality of relationships is constructed at Comms (Chapter 4) and at Serv (Chapter 5), and the construction of the ethical issue of the ‘good’ way to behave with each (Chapter 6). While Chapters 4 and 5 focus on the relationships themselves, Chapter 6 focuses on the socio-cognitive processes that underlie the work relationships. Last, the significance of the research for advancing theoretical understanding will be discussed, along with broader organisational and societal implications (Chapter 7).

The secondary meaning of this document is a PhD accreditation. Even though this accreditation can be granted solely on the academic report of the research, I believe that it is suitable to accentuate the narration of the research as an activity (Gergen, 1982). Telling our own stories has been argued as beneficial for the quality of research and for enhancing academic collaboration (Anteby, 2013). Reflexivity will be particularly emphasised in Chapter 3, but I will also try to show the learning process throughout the whole document.

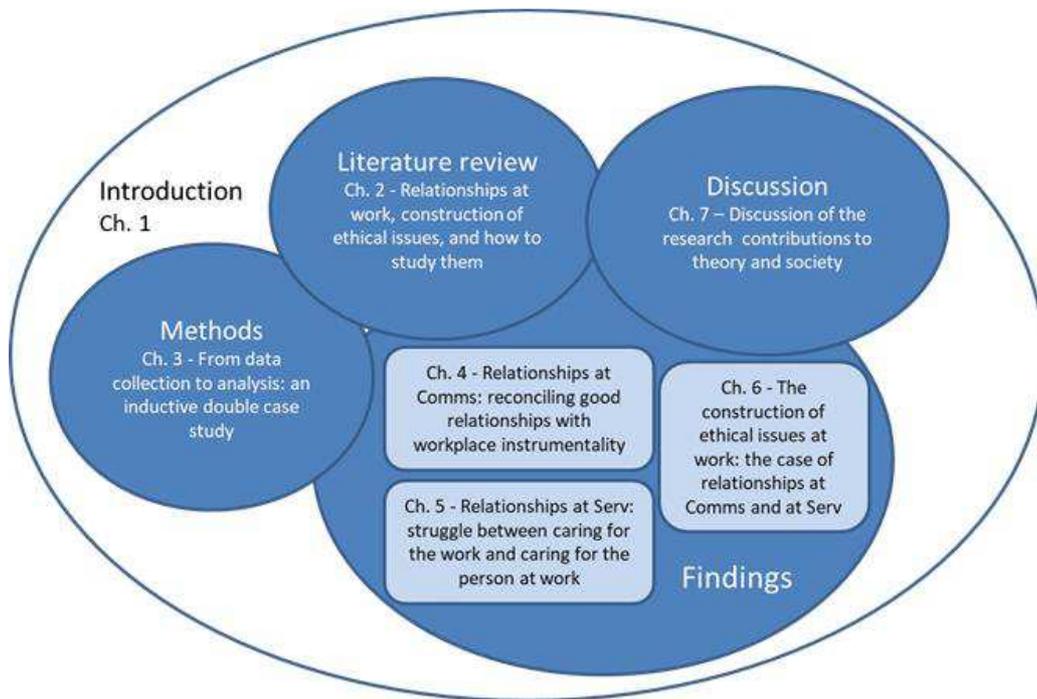


Figure 1: Overview of the document organisation

## CHAPTER 2- Relationships at work, construction of ethical issues, and how to study them

### Introduction

The purpose of this first chapter is twofold. On the one hand, it aims at presenting the academic knowledge that has been mobilised to shape and address the research question, and on the other hand, it aims at critically analysing how this research project might contribute to advancing academic research, i.e. the expected theoretical contributions.

Three bodies of scholarship were identified during the first stage of the research project as suiting the research topic particularly well: relationships at work, behavioural ethics, and sensemaking. However, they have been reread in the light of the empirical material, and the analysis has been deepened through successive iterations by going back and forth to theory and data analysis. For instance, while the initial focus was on 'connections', the broader concept of 'relationships' has been adopted eventually because it better comprehends the empirical observations. Moreover, during the in-depth qualitative analysis that had been applied to the data, the ethics of care was drawn because this stream of literature allowed making sense of the conflict of responsibility observed in the field between taking care of colleagues and taking care of the work.

This research joins bodies of literature on ethics and on relationships at work, which yields novel insights. If the quality of relationships at work has been highlighted as influenced by the organisational context, more research is still needed to better understand the processes underlying this mechanism (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). The morality of how to treat the other person at work is contingent upon the organisational context (Jackall, 1988; Belmi and Pfeffer, 2015). Hence, the question I ask is how the quality of relationships is shaped in the organisational context.

Furthermore, this research contributes to understand the construction of ethical issues in organisations. Behavioural ethics has been concerned with

the question of why and when people behave (un)ethically (Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Recently scholars of behavioural ethics have pointed out the problem of ethical unawareness (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Business scandals are characterised by the judgment of unethicity on practices that members of the organisation did not recognise pertaining to the realm of morality (Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012). As a result of the problem of ethical unawareness, more and more voices have proposed that ethicality be contingent in context (Sonenshein, 2007; Gordon, *et al.*, 2009; Reinecke and Ansari, 2015). This research inquires how ethical (un)awareness is constructed in the workplace. The case of relationships at work constitutes a relevant case to address this question since the way to relate to each other at work is mostly implicitly worked out as a mundane and trivial question. The sensemaking perspective (Weick, 1995; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014) has been found useful to explain the construction of ethical issues in organisations (Sonenshein, 2007; Reinecke and Ansari, 2015). This leads to the second research question addressed in this research, namely: how people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work.

Finally, in this chapter, I will develop the expected challenges to study this phenomenon empirically. While several studies have endeavoured to develop conceptual models of the construction of ethical issues in organisations (Sonenshein, 2007; Parmar, 2014) these models have not been applied empirically. I will develop the epistemological and methodological considerations that have guided this empirical research.

## **I– Relationships at work: definition, quality and ethicality**

As Ragins and Dutton (2007) state in their book on positive relationships at work, relationships are the very essence of life quality, and work relationships stand for a significant part of all relationships. Having good relationships with people at work will make the workplace experience more positive, and is a strong motivation to keep one's job (Sias and Cahill, 1998). Even 'connections' at work that are unities of interactions composing of relationships, condition well-being (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008).

To begin with, I will present the literature that applies to the empirical phenomenon itself, i.e. what is looked at. In this research, this point is not trivial since the literature is various and multi-faceted. Scholars of relationships refer to terms such as relationships, social interactions, relational behaviour, connections, or interpersonal behaviour.

### **The social phenomenon under study: Social interactions, relationships at work, friendship, and connections**

#### *Social interactions and relationships*

Different terms appear in social science research to refer to relationships. The first term that stands out is 'social interaction'. Social interaction is commonly used in empirical psychology to account for micro-behaviours, in the sense that they are observable from outside and occurring in a specific spatial and time space, between two or more people (e.g. Kenny, 1996). This stream of research is broad enough to encompass diverse behaviours that range, for example, from efficiency in work communication to perception of intimacy (Kenny, 1996). Moreover, social interactions are used with an objectivist lens but also to describe social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Luckmann, 2008). In this research, I focus on how people construct the quality of relationships at work, hence it is useful to keep using a generic term that can encompass a wide range of realities. I will continue using the term social interaction for the phenomenon that this research focuses on, especially when referring to the collective aspect of the phenomenon. However, research that has been focusing on the quality of social interactions at work uses other terms, notably 'relationships' and 'connections'.

The term 'relationships' is more specific than the expression 'social interactions', but is also more ambiguous. Talking about 'relationships' marks the ambition to reify what is going on between two people holistically and in particular in the long run. However, this ambition led to multiple uses of the term, from a pattern of exchanges (e.g. Sanchez-Burks, 2002; Rai and Fiske, 2011) to sacred accounts of what is going on between two people who are special to each other like a mother and child (e.g. Bowlby, 1973). To avoid this conceptual chasm the term relationship will be used here qualified by the 'work' perspective, i.e. referring to 'work relationships', 'relationships at work'

or 'workplace relationships', that limits greatly the range of phenomena that are implied (e.g. Ragins and Dutton, 2007; Ferris, *et al.*, 2009). Consequently, this research will focus on relationships at work as 'pattern of exchanges' (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009) that happens relatively to the workplace -physically at work, or symbolically in the work domain.

#### *Work relationships, friendship, and connections*

'Work relationships' entails a multifaceted social phenomenon: from the routinized work interaction happening recurrently when performing work task to a relationship that goes over the contingency of work and develops to friendship. Work relationships are usually conceptualised as distinguished from friendship (Bridge and Baxter, 1992; Sias and Cahill, 1998). A stream of research tries to disentangle whether friendship is considered a suitable type of work relationships (Bridge and Baxter, 1992; Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Grayson, 2007; Mao and Hsieh, 2012; Ollier-Malaterre, *et al.*, 2013). Friendship is characterised by being voluntary and including a certain level of affects (Bridge and Baxter, 1992). The context of work triggers recurrent interactions and can be particularly favourable to develop friendships (Sias and Cahill, 1998). However, developing personal ties lead to role conflicts between being a friend and being a co-worker (Bridge and Baxter, 1992). For example, romantic relationships at work are considered disruptive and consequently are usually discouraged by the management (Elsesser and Peplau, 2006), especially in a western context where workers are expected to keep an affective distance (Sanchez-Burks, 2002; Mano and Gabriel, 2006). Also, some social networks can work as interest groups dominating others outside of the network (Baker and Dutton, 2007). Hence a potential negative effect of friendship at work is that it contributes to gender inequality: same-sex networks prevailing, they limit career advancement for women (Elsesser and Peplau, 2006).

Connections are defined more narrowly than relationships regarding when and how they occur (Kark, 2011), indeed 'a connection is a microunit of a relationship' (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008, p.139). They constitute the primary social material on which organisations are built: 'Organizations depend on individuals to interact and form connections to accomplish the work of the organization' (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003, p.263). Importantly these

'consequential moments of interpersonal contacts' (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008, p.140) have straightforward outcomes: high-quality connections are considered as 'life-giving' and low-quality connections as 'life-depleting' (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003, p.263). Scholars have thus emphasised the positivity of high-quality connections (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008; Kark, 2011). From an empirical point of view, relationships are difficult to position in time and space as they develop through different phases over time (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009). Hence, connections are conceptually less equivocal than relationships, but they do not allow covering all the aspects of the social phenomenon observed in the field. Hence, one of the contributions of this research will be to better define the concept, from empirical analysis, in relation to other concepts, especially social interaction and connections.

### **Defining the quality of work relationships**

Most of the research on relationships at work is underpinned by social exchange theory (see Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) for a review). From this perspective, relationships both originate in and enable the exchange of resources. People develop relationships so as to exchange economic or symbolic resources and the reciprocal development of relationships allows the individual to increase his access to resources. Hence, the quality of relationships is defined through the material and symbolic benefits that can be obtained from the relationships, such as information, help on the task or emotional support. This instrumental assumption underpins research on leader-member exchanges (Graen and Uhl-bien, 1995; Wayne, *et al.*, 1997; Bernerth and Hirschfeld, 2016), on team-member exchanges (Seers, 1989; Banks, *et al.*, 2014; Schermuly and Meyer, 2016), and on social networks (Lincoln and Miller, 1979; Kilduff and Brass, 2010; Casciaro, *et al.*, 2014).

On the contrary, researchers from the positive organisational scholarship took their distance from the instrumentality inherent to social exchange theory so as to be able to focus on the subjective experience of the relationships (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Dutton and Ragins, 2007; Heaphy and Dutton, 2008; Kark, 2011; Stephens, *et al.*, 2013). Instead of defining the quality of relationship through the benefits that can be obtained from it, scholars of positive relationships at work emphasise the relationship as a

substance. From a fixed resources view where benefits would be shared between the self and the other person, they moved to a generative view where the benefits increase mutually between the self and the other person. This allowed them to go beyond a self-centred view of relationships to a collective understanding of positivity. Instead of defining the quality of the relationship through the instrumental benefits that can be obtained from it, scholars define a positive work relationship as 'a reoccurring connection' that 'is experienced as mutually beneficial, where beneficial is defined broadly to include any kind of positive state, process, or outcome in the relationship' (Ragins and Dutton, 2007, p.9). Rather than a self-centred view of relationships, this definition foregrounds a collective understanding of positivity. Similarly, high-quality connections are defined through the positive subjective experience they represent for both sides of the relationship: feelings of vitality and aliveness, positive regard, and mutuality (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003).

### **Quality of relationships and emotionality**

This positive experience of the relationship seems to rest on two features: closeness and emotionality. Closeness can be defined as a sense of bonding when the relationship goes 'beyond the mere perfunctory tasks associated with their work' (Dumas, *et al.*, 2013, p.1378). This definition echoes the distinction, and even conflict, that has been highlighted between 'friend' and 'work associate' (Katz and Kahn, 1978; Bridge and Baxter, 1992). Moreover, enhancing closeness requires exchanging on personal aspects of life (Sias and Cahill, 1998; Dumas, *et al.*, 2013). Closeness on his turn enhances intimacy that has been defined as a specific form of high-quality relationships (Kark, 2011). Kark (2011) defines intimacy as 'a form of close relatedness in which an individual shares his or her innermost emotions, experiences, and thoughts with the other and experiences empathic responsiveness, a depth of understanding and a sense of shared meaning.' (p.3).

Since high-quality relationships require exchanging on personal grounds, the degree of emotions that infuse the relationship is also higher (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003). While emotional carrying capacity has been designated as a key feature of high-quality relationships (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Stephens, *et al.*, 2013), on the contrary Ferris et al. (2009) condemn too

high a level of affect in work relationships as it can impede the objectivity that is necessary for performing at work. This research will contribute to disentangle the level of affects that people consider to be suitable for good relationships at work.

### **Fostering quality of work relationships**

As high-quality relationships at work have been shown to be beneficial both for the individual and for the organisation, researchers have endeavoured to bring out the conditions for their development. They have mainly focused on individual factors such as passion (Philippe, *et al.*, 2010), interpersonal affect regulation (Niven, *et al.*, 2012), attachment style (Bowlby, 1973; Rom and Mikulincer, 2003; Geller and Bamberger, 2009), and forgiveness (Aquino, *et al.*, 2003).

However, the question of how the organisational context plays a role in fostering or hindering high-quality relationships has not been greatly researched. An exception is the work of Kahn who focuses on work dimensions and sees the following elements as facilitators of positive work relationships: task accomplishment, career development, sense making, provision of meaning, and personal support. (Kahn, 2007, p.1385). However, these factors entangle outcomes of positive relationships and processes to reach these outcomes. Moreover, it is not clear whether they are at the individual or the organisational level of analysis. Stephens *et al.* (2011) propose a conceptual model of the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural mechanisms building high-quality connections. They take into account the organisational context, mainly the practices, but they position it only as a moderator in the mechanism linking individual factors to high-quality connections. The authors highlight that their model is a simplified view of fragmented factors that are in fact interrelated. In particular, they do not provide any qualification of the moderating role of the organisational context. This research addresses this question and aims at unveiling how the quality of relationships is shaped in the organisational context.

## **Quality of relationships as care and compassion**

Caring and compassionate behaviours are one specific form of high-quality relationships. Research on care and compassion have been prolific on discussing the organisational factors that would foster compassionate organising (Dutton, *et al.*, 2006). They recognise that beyond the individual endeavour, a more collective and systematic caring system can thrive when compassion becomes 'legitimated within an organizational context and propagated among organisational members' (Kanov, *et al.*, 2004, p.810). In particular, researchers have emphasised the role of the permeability of the work-non-work boundary (Lilius, *et al.*, 2011), and the core assumptions of the role of work organisations (Simpson, *et al.*, 2015).

Compassion concerns only the specific instance of noticing, feeling, and reacting to the pain of another person (Kanov, *et al.*, 2004), and as a result, compassion is not sufficient to ensure concern for the other person in general. As Fotaki emphasises 'Compassion that is a necessary basis for ethical foundation of care might arise from bodily affects and emotions but as an individual pre-moral sentiment on its own it cannot ensure responsive care.' (Fotaki, 2015, p.200). Taking stock of this limitation of the concept of compassion to account for high-quality relationships, I turn now to an ethic of care perspective to enrich the view of care in relationships.

## **A contextual ethical perspective on relationships: an ethics of care**

While I was trying to understand what I was observing in the field, I found a critical cleavage in how people made sense of the relationship to the other person at work. Whether the other person is considered as an end in him or herself or as a means to the work appeared as a critical distinction in the process of constructing the quality of relationships at work. The ethics of care approach, which is rooted in the alternative perspective of feminist ethics (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993; Liedtka, 1996; Tronto, 2010; Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012), appeared to address this cleavage that was observed in the empirical material. Tronto states that practising an ethics of care 'requires that the perspectives, interests, and concerns of the others be placed as a more central concern' (Tronto, 1993, p.18). Lawrence and Maitlis (2012) stress that

an ethics of care is 'an approach to morality that emphasises the concrete needs of people with whom we are in relationship' (p.643).

Originally the notion of care was developed and inspired by developmental insights into the parent-child relationship (Sevenhuijsen, 1998; Held, 2006). A caring relationship involves the nurturing of the relationship in a growth perspective. The term 'ethics of care' was proposed by Gilligan (1982) in her groundbreaking book that criticised the prevailing view of morality in which a higher morality was based on rules and separateness. In this view respecting Universal rights is the higher level of morality. In contrast, she proposes to value an alternative morality based on responsibility and connectedness that she observes in her empirical investigations. Critically for this research, an ethics of care is considered as a contextual approach to ethics as opposed to Universalist accounts of morality (Tronto, 1993; Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012). Ethical dilemmas are deliberated in a concrete situation, according to relationships with particular others. For instance, while stealing is bad, a husband stealing a drug to save his wife's life is not necessarily the wrong choice (Gilligan, 1982). Ethics is 'not a system of principles, but a mode of responsiveness' to relationships and the obligations and responsibilities that they entail for particular others (Cole and Coultrap-McQuin, 1992, p.40). Relationships with particular others are the sources of our moral obligations.

An ethics of care thus provides a framework to look at relationships at work in and for themselves. The perspective of this research is to enquire how the ethicality of relationships at work is constructed in practice since 'organizational ethics is constructed in and through those micro-practices that shape conduct' (Gordon, *et al.*, 2009, p.91).

The ethics of care scholarship was brought into this research project to enlighten the understanding of the data. However, the ethical perspective infused the project from the start. I considered – from my own work experience – relationships at work to be a case of mundane ethical behaviour. Hence, I looked at research on ethical behaviours and how they can inform the empirical phenomenon of the quality of relationships at work.

## **II– Construction of ethical issues in organisations**

Why do we behave ethically or not? This question has been tackled intensively in the research field of behavioural ethics (or ethical decision making) for at least 30 years (see for example Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008). This stream of research has revealed that the morality of everyday life offers a more complicated picture of human behaviour (Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2013). Several theoretical models have been developed. First, there had been the rationalist models of ethical judgment and behaviour (Rest, 1986; Jones, 1991), but other models have been built on the ground of their critics, for example, models of ethical issues in organisations (Sonenshein, 2007; Sonenshein, 2009; Parmar, 2014), of leader ethical decision making (Thiel, *et al.*, 2012), of values work (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013), or on the origin of compassionate decision making (Simpson, *et al.*, 2014). In this section, I will present the main models (rationalists) on which this scholarship has been originally built and then discuss the main lines of criticisms that are relevant to this research. I will explicitly discuss my view of relationships at work as a relevant case for the study of (un)ethical behaviours.

### *Foreword: defining the moral and the ethical*

In most work, authors in the field of behavioural ethics do not define ‘morality’ and ‘ethicality’. Noticeably, ‘ethical’ and ‘moral’ are used interchangeably (e.g. Sonenshein, 2007; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). This identical meaning has grounding in lay knowledge. Oxford Dictionary defines ‘ethical’ as ‘Relating to moral principles or the branch of knowledge dealing with these’ which legitimise the equivalence between the two terms (English Oxford Living Dictionary, 2018). Even more, it seems that the origins of the word ‘morality’ are simply the Latin translation of ancient Greek in which originates ‘ethics’ (Online Etymology Dictionary). In this research, I will also use the two terms interchangeably.

Moreover, the adjectives ‘moral’ or ‘ethical’ have two possible meanings: either they merely indicate that something pertains to the realm of right and wrong (then in opposition to ‘amoral’) or they indicate the respect of principles of right behaviour (then in opposition to ‘unethical’ or ‘immoral’). In this research, I use the terms moral and ethical in the latter meaning, i.e. as

representing the right behaviour. Finally, I will talk about 'ethicality' of an action or a situation to account for their pertaining to the principles of right and wrong behaviour.

Importantly, I do not define a priori what is ethical and unethical. Trevino et al. (2014) define the line between unethical and ethical according to 'accepted moral norms in society' (pp. 636-637), so that lying, cheating and stealing for example, are unethical. Hence, the authors define a priori what is ethical and then research why people would behave ethically or not. On the contrary, the focus of this research is precisely to determine how a particular behaviour comes to be seen as ethical or unethical. As Trevino et al., I assume the existence of accepted moral norms in society but I am interested in unveiling the specificity of moral norms in work organisations and especially how these norms came to be constructed.

### **Work relationships as an instance of ethical behaviour: from normative to empirical view of ethicality**

Why would people be nice to each other at work? I argue that relationships at work can be a case of ethical behaviour as conceived in the field of behavioural ethics. Reconciling the normative and empirical definitions of business ethics has been a recurrent concern in the field (Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Bowie, 2009; Hiller, 2010). My interest lies in how people construct morality in the workplace, therefore I adopt an empirical definition of ethicality. Research on high-quality relationships has proposed that they allow 'human flourishing' (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003, p.263) and emotional connectivity (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Dutton and Ragins, 2007). Hence, it 'feels' good having respectful and caring work relationships. Morality has been more and more described as an emotion (Solomon, 1998; Bandura, 1999; Lawrence and Maitlis, 2012; Barclay and Kiefer, 2014; Linehan and O'Brien, 2017). However, the ethical case can be made of relational endeavour as a normative ethical behaviour.

On the normative side being nice, respectful and caring with each other at work fits in the views of three main philosophies of morality: deontology, consequentialism and virtue ethics (Bartels, *et al.*, 2014). The deontological

approach consists in focusing on the morality of the act rather than on the consequences of the act and is usually associated with Kantianism. In this perspective, striving for quality in one's connections with others at work fits with the well-known categorical imperative that can be summarized as follows: 'Always act so as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of others, as an end, and not as a means' (MacIntyre, 2007, p.46). Moreover, having good relationships at work can also be judged ethical from the perspective of consequentialism. Consequentialism consists in placing the consequences of an act (often in terms of overall well-being) as the first criteria to judge the morality of an action (Gustafson, 2013). Enhancing good relationships at work and in particular high-quality connections have been emphasised as fostering well-being in the workplace (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003). Hence, the handling of good quality relationships at work is also a moral behaviour according to consequentialism. Finally, good relationships can also be seen as a virtuous practice. I refer to MacIntyre's Aristotelian view of ethics (MacIntyre, 2007). This view positions the ethical behaviour as a virtuous one. The virtues are defined in the tradition of a given community of practice, and in this way treating other persons well at work stands for a virtuous work practice in most communities.

The ethics of care perspective would reconcile both normative and empirical rationales. The process of care is legitimised by its positive outcomes for the person that is cared for, therefore entails a normative injunction (Tronto, 1993). However, caring is based on an emotional connection (Fotaki, 2015), and can only make sense in the particular context of the relationship with a particular other (Liedtka, 1996; Noddings, 2003). Hence, an ethics of care perspective assumes the ethicality in relationships but does not provide any definitive guidelines as to the general relational behaviour to adopt. The morality in relationships has to be worked out in context.

### **Beyond rationalism**

The scholarship of behavioural ethics was built primarily on research on ethical decision making. Making ethical decisions is typically thought to follow four steps as suggested by Rest's model (1986): recognising the ethical issue, judging it, forming an intention towards it and finally behaving ethically.

Drawing from this model (and from Trevino's person-situation model (1986) as well), Jones (1991) added the influence of the intensity of the morality that relies on characteristics of the situation as perceived by the individual. These two models are the most used in empirical research on ethical decision making (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Craft, 2013). This stream of research has been efficient to understand human moral reasoning, but it has two main limitations regarding my research topic: firstly, its underlying assumption of reflective reasoning as opposed to intuitionally driven judgment and behaviour, and secondly its focus on antecedents of ethical behaviours rather than on understanding the underlying processes linking the different levels. I will develop these two lines of criticism and discuss how the case of relationships at work may contribute to overcoming them.

*The duality of reflective reasoning and intuition and the consequences for ethical (un)awareness*

Dual-process theories in cognitive sciences insist that our cognitive processes follow two separate paths in two different systems. Evans (2013) recognizes that there has been a proliferation of terms around the dual-system theory that are often misaligned, hence leading to inconsistencies or even contradictions in the theories. For the purpose of this research I follow Evans (2010) and distinguish between a System 1 driven by intuitions and a System 2 driven by reflective reasoning. System 1 is more automatic and less costly regarding cognitive resources. For his review of the dual system, Evans (2010) starts with the definition of intuition from the Oxford English Dictionary and states that intuition is an 'Immediate apprehension by the mind without the intervention of reasoning' (p.313). System 1 is actually the most used, although it has been less studied than System 2 (Evans, 2010; Evans and Stanovich, 2013). System 2 is driven by reflective reasoning, hence is more controlled, and is more demanding of cognitive resources but allows for fewer biases and errors (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). The question of conscious and unconscious transcends the two systems perspective, especially because reflective reasoning rests for parts on conscious and unconscious experiences (Evans, 2010).

Dual-process theories have been criticized for being simplistic, however they provide a heuristic representation of the complexity of human

cognition (Evans, 2013). In particular, the dual-process perspective allows for unveiling that the theoretical models in behavioural ethics have mainly been based on a rationalist view of judgment and behaviour (Sonenshein, 2007; Martin and Parmar, 2012). Rationalist models assume that ethical behaviours result from reflective reasoning. The proponents of the rationalist approach to moral behaviours have been criticised for using issue scenarios that were supposed to measure reflective reasoning but actually favoured a posteriori rationalisations (Sonenshein, 2007). These models have certainly proven useful to describe and explain a range of ethical behaviours, but it appears that they apply to a rather limited range of situations. It is argued that the literature on ethical decision making has mostly focused on reflective processes, on system 2, rather than on system 1, that would, however, be the most prominent system used in moral reasoning (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Dinh and Lord, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Therefore, recent research view ethical behaviours as the result of multiple processing systems (Reynolds, *et al.*, 2010; Dinh and Lord, 2013). Cushman et al. state that 'although some moral principles are available for conscious reasoning in a large majority of subjects, others are not available and appear to operate in intuitive processes' (2006, p.1087). Retrospective justification gives the wrong impression that an actual reflective reasoning process has taken place, but many moral judgements are made automatically (Cushman, *et al.*, 2006).

The multiple processing system of reasoning has an important consequence for research on the ethics of relationships at work: moral awareness should no longer be a condition defining the concept of ethical behaviour. Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe (2008) argue strongly for the study of moral (un)awareness, followed by many scholars (De Cremer, *et al.*, 2011; Kouchaki, *et al.*, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Moral (or ethical) awareness characterizes a situation when a person considers morality is at stake in her decision or her behaviour. On the contrary, moral unawareness signifies that the person does not see an ethical issue in the situation, thus does not apply any sort of ethical decision making. This turn in the scholarship of behavioural ethics is critical for the topic here since the quality of relationships at work is not necessarily constructed as an ethical issue. If a connection is necessarily made consciously, 'involving mutual awareness' (Kark, 2011, p.1), it is not

settled whether people see a moral stake in their relationships at work. While I have made the case that the quality of relationships at work could bear ethicality from various normative ethical perspectives (see before), as a mundane phenomenon, members of the work organisation may or may not see the ethicality in their relationships.

#### *The role of emotions and affects and the dual process perspective*

Intuitionists argue that most of our decisions are driven by emotions and affects and that reasoned explanations are only constructed afterwards (Haidt, 2001; Cushman, *et al.*, 2006; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008). However, the specific roles of emotions and affects are unclear. In his influential article, Haidt (2001) was considering emotions as part of the intuitive side of the process and was using the terms ‘emotions’ and ‘affects’ interchangeably. Later work has sometimes posited emotions in the intuition side of the process (e.g. Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008) while others defined intuitions as affective and automatic (Sonenshein, 2007). For this research, I draw on the scholarship on emotions in organizations and define emotions as ‘discrete and intense but short-lived experiences’ and affects as an ‘umbrella term’ comprising these acute experiences as well as more diffuse experiences that individuals do not necessarily recognize as emotions but nevertheless determine their behaviour (Elfenbein, 2007, pp. 316-317). While affects are bodily experience, they only become emotions when they reach the level of consciousness and are verbalized (Fotaki, *et al.*, 2017). Hence, when adopting these definitions of emotions and affects, it appears that such as consciousness transcends the dual-process system (Evans, 2010), emotions and affects can both play a role in intuitive and in reflective reasoning processes. One of the aims of this research is to explore the role of affects and emotions in the construction of ethical issues at work.

#### *Unpacking the underlying processes*

While much research is focusing on determining antecedents of ethical behaviours, there is still a dearth of research on the underlying processes (Sonenshein, 2007; Dinh and Lord, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). For instance, research has highlighted that ethical behaviours were dependant on ethical climate (Vardaman, *et al.*, 2014), ethical ideology (Henle, *et al.*, 2005),

exposure to dishonest behaviour (Gino, *et al.*, 2009), loss or gain framing (Kern and Chugh, 2009), hierarchical rank in organisations (Kennedy and Anderson, 2017), and ambiguity of the situation (Pittarello, *et al.*, 2015). However, 'attention to the dynamics of moral processing has been limited', therefore 'a more holistic understanding of these processes is needed to provide a comprehensive framework for theory and interventions' (Dinh and Lord, 2013, p.380). This research aims at unpacking the processes that underpin ethical behaviours in organisations. Specifically, this research focuses on the (un)awareness of ethical issues and how it is constructed in the organisational context.

### **Ethical framing, context, and construction of ethical issue**

'Most all of us may commit unethical behaviours, given the right circumstances' (De Cremer, *et al.*, 2010, p.2). While De Cremer *et al.* call for more research on understanding the effect of the context on (un)ethical behaviours, I am interested in looking at how morality is constructed in context. Notwithstanding the cognitive nature of the phenomenon to observe, it is well known that behaviours result from interaction with the physical, social, and symbolic environment (Ajzen, 1991). Taking stock from critics of cognitivism, Sonenshein (2007) stresses: 'it is important that scholars study the interpretive processes that construct ethical issues out of social stimuli in the environment' (p.1026). In this research, I adopt a socially constructed view of morality and consider that 'Moralties emerge as large numbers of people interact with each other, constrained and enabled by culturally and historically specific sets of institutions and technologies.' (Graham, *et al.*, 2011, p.368).

My point is not to dismiss cognitive approaches of ethical behaviour, but to emphasise the interaction between cognitions and social context. For instance, research on the role of decision frames show that ethicality is dependent on the way the context is understood. It appears that the way people frame an issue, especially as ethical as opposed to as business-like, will determine their behaviour (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 1999; Gino, *et al.*, 2009; Reynolds, *et al.*, 2010; Molinsky, *et al.*, 2012; Kouchaki, *et al.*, 2013). Hence, if people identify the issue they are facing as a business problem, they will not see the ethical issue in it, and they are unlikely to take morality into account to

determine appropriate behaviours. Dinh and Lord (2013) stress the role of social interactions and affirm that 'moral behavior is subject to social interpretive processes and is shaped by principles endemic to a larger collective, such as a group or culture, or by a particular type of social relationship (e.g. relations with family members or a business partner)' (p.382). By enquiring how people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work, this research addresses how ethical decision frames are constituted.

### **Sensemaking and construction of ethical issues**

Sonenshein's (2007; 2009) effort to integrate literature on behavioural ethics with more interpretative streams such as sensemaking is pivotal to this research project. For Weick (1995), sensemaking happens when people are confronted with an event, and extract the cues that allow them to make sense of the situation and enact this sensemaking by acting accordingly to the meaning that they have awarded to the situation. In brief, sensemaking allows to 'make the world more orderly' (Weick, *et al.*, 2005, p.410). It is triggered by ambiguous or equivocal situations, which is supposedly the case of the good way to behave with each other at work. There is certainly a large repertoire of possible interactional behaviours to deal with another person at work in any type of situation. However, only a narrow range of those behaviours are enacted. This research started from the observation that the pattern of work relationships may be significantly different from one organisation to another. The question is then how do people make sense and enact the appropriate relationships at work.

The sensemaking perspective has been criticized for its low level of theorisation and the sensemaking scholarship for a low level of consistency (Weick, 1995; Maitlis and Christianson, 2013; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). As Weick (1995) acknowledges in his influential book, sensemaking 'is best described as a developing set of ideas with explanatory possibilities, rather than as a body of knowledge' (p.xi). In particular, there are two related tensions in the sensemaking scholarship that are particularly relevant to this research, namely between the effortful-reflective and the effortless-intuitive processes, and between the social and the individual levels.

### *Sensemaking and reflective reasoning*

An ontological question that pertains to the sensemaking perspective is to what extent it is an effortful and, as a result, driven by reflective processes. Weick's (1995) writing is ambiguous on this question. Weick states that 'to understand sensemaking is to be sensitive to the ways in which people chop moments out of continuous flows and extract cues from those moments' (p.43). This definition makes sensemaking sound like an intended action. However, Weick also talks about 'effortless sensemaking' for which investigators 'are more likely to see sense that has already been made than to see the actual making of it' (p.49). In this latter view, sensemaking can even be seen as an embodied process, implying undermining the reflective processes in sensemaking. Similarly, the ambiguity about the level of reflectivity in the sensemaking process reproduces in the sensemaking scholarship. Cunliffe and Coupland (2012) describe embodied narrative sensemaking as taking place 'where embodied and felt experiences are integral to creating plausible accounts of our experience and ourselves.' (p. 83). On the opposite end of this reflective-intuitive continuum, for Maitlis and Christianson (2013) 'sensemaking is an effortful and potentially costly process that requires people to feel motivated to give up their existing accounts of the world and to work to construct new meanings' (p.25). Sandberg and Tsoukas (2014) emphasise that the sensemaking process is still unclear, and in particular that ongoing, immanent, embodied sensemaking has been neglected. They call for focusing on the enactment part of the sensemaking process as they consider it to be the core of sensemaking. Enactment is the synchronisation between sense and action (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). It happens when 'people act in such a way that their assumptions of realism become warranted' (Weick, 1995, p.36).

This research will contribute to the debate on the positioning of the sensemaking process on a continuum from a pole where sensemaking would be intellectualised, effortful, and episodic to a pole where it would rather be effortless, embodied, and immanent.

### *Sensemaking and level of analysis*

This research focuses on the interaction between the individual and the organisational level in the construction of ethical issues at work. In the sensemaking scholarship, this question is still to be resolved. The question of

level was already stressed as a knot in Weick's influential book: 'Sensemaking is grounded in both individual and social activity, and whether the two are even separable will be a recurrent issue in this book, because it has been a durable tension in the human condition' (Weick, 1995, p.6). While some scholars tend to consider sensemaking only at the individual level, a collective view of sensemaking has also been developed (Stigliani and Ravasi, 2012). Groups can develop a common view of a situation (Weick, 1993), however, the interaction between individual and collective sensemaking is not clear: 'While meaning exists that is not shared by all the members within a group, [...] groups develop a body of universally shared meaning and act on the basis of that shared meaning' (Boyce, 1995, p.109). In their recent review of sensemaking, Maitlis and Christianson (2013) still note an ontological question of sensemaking between individual and collective level. In particular, they call for studying 'the social, cultural, economic, and political forces that shape what groups will notice' as well as 'the constitutive effects of macro-level discourse on sensemaking' (p.56). Sensemaking takes place in a background, and the macro-context in which it takes place has been overlooked (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014).

### *Organisational culture and sensemaking*

The concept of organisational culture as defined by Pettigrew (1979) is constituted of 'the amalgam of beliefs, ideology, language, ritual, and myth' (p.572). Organisational culture has especially been recognised as a recurrent concept for the study of ethical behaviours at work (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Craft, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Since I am looking at how ethical issues are constructed in the workplace, the concept of organisational culture seems important. Organisational culture gives 'a continuing sense of what that reality is all about in order to be acted upon' (Pettigrew, 1979, p.574). This function of organisational culture resembles sensemaking. Culture has indeed been defined as 'shared sensemaking' (Morgan, *et al.*, 1997, p.138). Weick (1995) states that organisations have their own language and symbols that define sensemaking, so the way to make sense of what is going on, and then what is the appropriate behaviour to adopt, is embedded in the organisational culture. It seems that the organisational culture furnishes both the content of what it is to read – in particular in the practices and values

displayed dominantly in the organisation– and how to read it – the symbolic system.

However, the organisational culture is only one of the layers of the collective meaning of things. For instance, the concept of organisational culture has been criticised for not accounting for the numerous subcultures in an organisation (Frost, 1991). Moreover, the organisational culture inscribes in a broader frame of social practices (Goffman, 1972; 1986). The organisation provides a specific context for social interaction, and this context is embedded in a larger societal context. Goffman described the social grammar constraints that people are unaware of, but that actually underpin their social relations. In this research I will distinguish the larger social context -culture is constituted of all primary frameworks of a social group (Goffman, 1986)- from the more local contexts of the work organisation.

### **The sensemaking-intuitionist model of the construction of ethical issues at work**

Corporate scandals are punctuating the business world, creating recurring surprises for how unethical organisations can appear when such unethical behaviours finally appear in the real world (Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012). It has long been suggested that the morality constructed in the workplace be specific to the organisation (Jackall, 1988). A middle manager quoted by Jackall (1988, p.109) illustrates how corporate ideology supplants ethical principles: 'What is right in the corporation is not what is right in a man's home or in his church. What is right in the corporation is what the guy above wants from you. That's what morality is in the corporation.' The case of relationships at work will allow inquiring how morality is constructed. More precisely I ask how people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work.

Some scholars try to understand the collective construction of ethical issues regarding ongoing events using different perspectives: values work (Whittle and Mueller, 2012; Gehman, *et al.*, 2013), emergence (Sonenshein, 2009), ethics as a collective process of sensemaking (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015), sensemaking and sensegiving (Sharma and Good, 2013), sensemaking and affordance (Seidel, *et al.*, 2013), ethics as practice (Gordon, *et al.*, 2009),

contradiction (Perezts, *et al.*, 2011), discourse (Ailon, 2013), or institutional theory (Anteby, 2010). Sonenshein (2007) proposes a theoretical sensemaking-intuitionist model of the construction of ethical issues at work. This model was chosen as a framework for analysing the phenomenon of relationships at work. It allows for taking stock of research on behavioural ethics while trying accounting for the complexity of the underlying processes.

Sonenshein's (2007) theoretical framework considers separately the construction of the issue and the subsequent judgement of the situation. This allows for ethical unawareness to be accounted for. The issue construction, triggered by uncertainty and equivocality, will not necessarily yield ethical considerations. In introducing the crucial role of uncertainty and equivocality, the model recognises the complexity of real life situations as opposed to the simplification of vignettes proposed for moral judgment in many research designs. However, the sensemaking-intuitionist model presents a linear development -issue construction, then intuitive judgment and finally explanation and justification (Sonenshein, 2007, p.1028) whereas it can be expected that reality be messier. This research aims at contributing to developing 'a more complicated picture' of the construction of ethical issues in organisations (p.1035). In particular, this research tries to disentangle the interplay between the collective and the individual level. Sonenshein's framework emphasises influences from individual factors such as experience and motivations, as well as collective factors such as social pressures and representation, but positions the process itself only at the individual level. This reductionism of the morality to the intrapsychic (Parmar, 2014) is one of the limitations that this research aims to address.

### **III– Epistemology, ontology, and methodological challenges**

Deetz (2009) argues that in the field of organisational studies we deal with different discourses that are not necessarily incommensurable. This research started from an empirical observation in my own work experience – how some workplaces benefit from caring relationships while others do not – and the endeavour to stick to an empirical phenomenon led to adopting a

world view that 'works at the time' (Creswell, 2009, p.11). However, each researcher has an interpretive repertoire that 'includes the paradigmatic, theoretical, and methodological qualifications and restrictions that guide and constrain research work.' (Alvesson and Kaerremann, 2007, p.1273). Hence, I will expose here the beliefs and assumptions on the reality (ontology) and on the role of knowledge (epistemology) that underpin this research.

Moreover, this research adopts a pragmatic view of the alignment between theory and method (Creswell, 2009; Lamont and Swidler, 2014). This pragmatic view emphasises that 'the choice of methods turns on whether the intent is to specify the type of information to be collected in advance of the study or allow it to emerge from participants in the project' (Creswell, 2009, p.16). In this section, I will discuss the methodological challenges that pertain to the research question and the research design that has been chosen to handle them. Three challenges are highlighted: the right level of focus, the different levels of awareness, and the different standpoints of analysis.

### **Epistemological frame**

The epistemological frame adopted in this research is infused by interpretativism (Yanow and Ybema, 2009; Eisenhardt, *et al.*, 2016) and social constructivism (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Astley, 1985). These frames are particularly suitable to focus on processes, on the construction activity (Deetz, 2009). There are different approaches of interpretativism and 'what unifies them is their phenomenological base, which stipulates that person and world are inextricably related through lived experience of the world' (Sandberg, 2005, p.43). This research assumes that the context of the workplace is constructed by the members of the organisation, and constraints their possibilities for action.

In particular, the focus of this research lies in understanding the process of organising and more precisely what this process means for the construction of the issue of the 'good' way to relate to each other in the workplace. Hence it adopts a view of organisation as process: 'Organization is an attempt to order the intrinsic flux of human action, to channel it towards certain ends, to give it a particular shape, through generalizing and institutionalizing particular meanings and rules. At the same time,

organization is a pattern that is constituted, shaped, emerging from change' (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002, p.570). The focus here is not on the process of change in itself but rather on the surprise to see processes stabilising in interaction and what it entails for the phenomenon.

However, it is important here to affirm the possibility to work across different epistemologies. Using scholarships that tend to adopt positivist frameworks, I will occasionally have 'to set aside epistemological and ontological divisions' (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009, p.5). Since this research starts from a social phenomenon and aims at providing value to society (Walsh, *et al.*, 2003; Bell and Wray-Bliss, 2009; Abrahamson, *et al.*, 2016), it also needs to be able to talk to mainstream frameworks, which are mostly realist, i.e. they assume that research is about finding out about the real world out there. Weick (1995) says about people who study sensemaking that they 'oscillate ontologically because that is what helps them understand the actions of people in everyday life who could care less about ontology' (1995, p.35). In any case, the ontological question that divides realist and social constructivist ontologies should not be seen as a definitive chasm (Tsoukas, 2000). Hence, I will pragmatically endeavour to explain in detail the methodologies that support the findings in this research.

With these general epistemological reflexions in mind, I turn to explore the methodological challenges that pertain to studying relationships at work and the construction of ethical issues in organisations.

### **A holistic approach to tackle methodological challenges**

The field of behavioural ethics in organisations has been blossoming since the 1980s, and the question of why people behave ethically or unethically benefits now from quite a large body of knowledge. However systematic shortages in this research field have been highlighted and in particular the difficulty to account for the role of real-life context (Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). The field of business ethics has been regularly criticised for the lack of alignment between theories and methods (Randall and Gibson, 1990; Crane, 1999; Trevino, *et al.*, 2006; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Hiller, 2010). The field is mainly pervaded by objectivist epistemologies (Randall and Gibson, 1990; Crane, 1999) that complicate the study of the role of symbolic elements

like culture, ideologies, or representations. At the organisational level, ethical codes, ethical climate and ethical culture have been studied, but mainly in their formal dimensions (Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). The informal and more subjective elements of the organisational context have been overlooked. Some methodological propositions addressing this gap will be discussed here.

Methodological difficulties in the study of (un)ethical behaviours in organisations have long been pointed out. For instance, the overwhelming use of surveys with scenarios is the object of recurrent critics (Sonenshein, 2007). In general, researchers point out the lack of methodological imagination (Crane, 1999; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). In 1986, Trevino already highlighted that 'the observation and measurement of managers' ethics is difficult' (Trevino, 1986, p.615), but only almost 30 years later, together with den Nieuwenboer and Kish-Gephart, she encourages 'researchers to extend the results of laboratory research to field methodologies to insure generalizability of the findings to complex organisational environments' (Treviño, *et al.*, 2014, p.654). However, this position is actually marginal in the field of business ethics as most cited reviews in the field such as O'Fallon and Butterfield's (2005), Trevino, Weaver, and Reynolds' (2006) and Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe's (2008) do not mention the possibility of field research in the qualitative sense such as participant observation, or even any need for more qualitative analysis. While emphasising the empirical challenges in the study of ethical behaviours, some scholars have claimed a need for more holistic methods from assessing a poor level of theorisation in the field (Crane, 1999; Hiller, 2010). Conversely, the advancement in understanding ethical judgments and behaviours feeds the need for methodological innovation, for example, Bartels *et al.* (2014) assert that 'one implication of moral flexibility is that study participants may look to the study stimuli for cues about how to affirm their values when making choices. Seemingly insignificant differences in study design may affect the responses that participants give and the resulting inferences that researchers draw.'(p.26). Holistic methods such as ethnography have proved fruitful to unpack the complexity in the construction of ethicality (Gordon, *et al.*, 2009; Perezts, *et al.*, 2011; Reinecke and Ansari, 2015).

However, the flexibility of the research questions that an ethnography allows to address constitutes both a great strength of this method and one of its most criticised features (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Ethnography in itself is not necessarily suitable to answer a predetermined set of questions such as those that have been raised by models in organisational ethics. Hence this research draws on laboratory approaches but aims at collecting field data qualitatively. This approach has been called for recently: 'a central theme is the need to integrate research across diverse traditions, so that the precision and control of laboratory and field approaches can benefit from the ecological validity and richness of anthropological data, and vice-versa.' (Bartels, *et al.*, 2014, p.31).

The research design proposed to take up this challenge will be presented in Chapter 3, but first, three specific methodological challenges pertaining to the theoretical frame chosen to answer the research question will be presented: the level of analysis, the level of awareness and the implicit choice of standpoints in the observation.

#### *Finding the right focal point*

The question of the level of analysis has been highlighted as a common predicament in organisational research (e.g. Johns, 2006; Gooty, *et al.*, 2012). Holistic methods have in particular the critical advantage of potentially linking micro-, meso-, and macro-level of analysis. A particularly good example of a multi-level perspective can be found in the research of Gordon *et al.* (2009), which starts from an institutional perspective (the government political decisions) to draw on the impact on the organisation (the New South Wales Police Service) through different hierarchical groups as well as through the subjective view of the individuals.

The sensemaking perspective allows for looking at the micro-level as it has been argued that 'to work with the idea of sensemaking is to appreciate that smallness does not equate with insignificance' then 'small structures and short moments can have large consequences' (Weick, *et al.*, 2005, p.410). However, the sensemaking perspective has been criticized for being confined to the individual level (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). On the contrary, this research focuses on interactions and aims at unpacking how a larger organisational context is constructed. The work of Erving Goffman inspires

this perspective to study the micro-level as it relates to social norms. In his book entitled 'Interaction Ritual' (1972) he describes very much what the focus of this research is: 'It is that class of events which occurs during co-presence and by virtue of co-presence. The ultimate behavioural materials are the glances, gestures, positioning, and verbal statements that people continuously feed into the situation, whether intended or not. These are the external signs of orientation and involvement – states of mind and body not ordinarily examined with respect to their social organisation' (1972, p.1). This definition can be enlarged by including the virtual co-presence that has been recently shown as having significant value and effect as well (Mennecke, *et al.*, 2011). However, if Goffman looked at these interactions to understand their social structural determinants, that is to say, the social norms that are the common denominator of all interactional behaviours, the research question here focuses on the determinants at the organisational level. The focus is indeed on 'what is it that is going on here' (Goffman, 1986) but in this research, the 'here' means the work organisation, as it is produced in the interaction situation. The macro-level of society is not focused on in this research however it is recognised that social norms are a broader context that shapes relationships at work.

#### *The level of awareness*

Another empirical challenge is the extent to which people are fully aware of the determinants of their behaviour, and in particular, if they are aware of the ethicality at stakes. Participants can only tell what reaches the level of awareness.

It is expected that the cognitive processes underlying the construction of relationships at work encompass both reflective processes and intuitive ones. The connections in everyday work life can be replaced by routines, habits, which take place without reflectively thinking about it every time they take place (Gittell, 2003). However, before a behaviour became automatized or every time the expected script is disturbed, a reflective deliberation takes place (Gioia and Poole, 1984). One of the greatest contributions of Sonenshein's (2007) sensemaking-intuitionist model is to articulate the existence of different levels of awareness in the construction of ethical issues at work explicitly. This variation in the levels of awareness in the phenomenon that is

the focus of the research leads to rule out a direct measure of relational behaviours with a questionnaire as existing in the literature (Matthew, *et al.*, 2013).

Another reason for not using such a direct measure is the problem of social desirability that has been extensively discussed as a challenge in the study of ethical behaviour. The problem of social desirability bias, or the tendency for people to show a socially valuable image of themselves, was already identified as an issue more than two decades ago (Randall and Gibson, 1990; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994) and is still outlined as a weakness of the field in recent critics (Wouters, *et al.*, 2014). It has been argued that questionnaires allow for anonymity, which diminishes the risks of hiding unethical behaviours (Wouters, *et al.*, 2014). Yet, the authors recognise that this is only theoretical and that the risk of social desirability bias has still to be handled while designing the questionnaire. This complexity is inherent to human socio-cognitive and affective functioning. The issue cannot be reduced to the question of whether participants would or would not disclose information that they have. Social psychologists have shown that people, before tricking other people, also trick themselves: people attribute their actions to their own beliefs and wills afterwards and not necessarily the other way around (Festinger, 1957; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Moreover, psychoanalytic understandings of human psyche have also underlined that man is not master at home (Freud, 2013). Hence, if people do not know themselves, how could they tell researchers? A holistic method of inquiry will be adopted in this research to render the complexity of the human psyche and its entanglement with the social context in which interactions occur.

#### *The choice of standpoints*

Adopting a pragmatic perspective (Creswell, 2009) this research considers the value of looking at the social phenomena at hands from different angles: from the participants' viewpoints and from the researchers' viewpoint. The latter also represents two different standpoints: a subjective interpretation or an objective measure. In particular, the organisational context, as a 'multiparadigmatic' (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009, p.3) concept of the field of organisational research requires specific attention with regard to the perspective to adopt to study it.

The importance of accounting for the role of the context in management and organisation research has been emphasised (Rousseau and Fried, 2001; Johns, 2006). However, there are different epistemological stances accounting for different views of the organisational context, and very often only one perspective is adopted. First, the objective perspective is adopted in positivist views. In this view, the context is presented as a reality that anybody could observe and that sets the constraints of behaviours. However, the complexity of the endeavour to measure the context objectively has led to the adoption of experimental methods in which the context can be simplified and controlled. This is a strategy mostly adopted in behavioural ethics (Gino, *et al.*, 2009; Kish-Gephart, *et al.*, 2010; Reynolds, *et al.*, 2010). This approach certainly holds great value for a better understanding of the functioning of cognitive processes relatively to ethical behaviours. Nevertheless, it does not allow for accounting for the complexity of real organisational life and calls for field research have been made (Treviño, *et al.*, 2014).

Second, in the subjective perspective, the context is considered from the interpretation of the participants of the study. In this case, the context is acknowledged to be subject to interpretation, and the role of the context in shaping behaviour can only be apprehended by looking at the way people interpret the context. This perspective will be adopted in this research. In particular, the sensemaking perspective that has been chosen as a theoretical lens fits within this subjective viewpoint, as the context is only significant to the extent that people extract cues in their environment to make sense of what is going on (Weick, *et al.*, 2005; Maitlis and Christianson, 2013). This can typically be observed by interviews or other verbal production as subjective accounts, which is often the case of sensemaking research, as 'sensemaking is, importantly, an issue of language, talk, and communication' (Weick, *et al.*, 2005, p.409).

Finally, I would like to distinguish the latter with the interpretive view of context that accounts for the view of the researcher on the context. The distinction that I draw between the subjective and the interpretive view can be justified by the respect of the researcher's unavoidable alterity. Indeed the researcher never has the same view on the context as the members of the

organisation. Even if he chooses a participant observation, what is at stake for him/her will never be the same as for the actual members of the organisation<sup>1</sup>. The need to value both perspectives in the data collection is emphasised here, both for ethical reasons -respecting the voice of the people studied- and for the quality of research –looking at a phenomenon from different angles (Islam, 2015).

Consequently, this research will adopt a holistic method in the sense of comprehending the complexity of the context as a subjective phenomenon and its interplay with cognitions, affects, and behaviours. However, I will consider in the analysis the distinction between a subjective (from the participants) and an interpretative (from the researcher) view of what is going on here.

## **Conclusion**

Work organisations are made of people interacting with each other. The quality of these relations is particularly determinant for people to be fulfilled at work, and even the most basic elements of these relationships, the connections, play a role in well-being at work (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Dutton and Ragins, 2007; Heaphy and Dutton, 2008). However, how the quality of relationships is shaped in the workplace is still to be researched (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). To tackle this question a particular lens is adopted here to consider that the way people relate to each other at work pertains to ethics. How do people determine how they ought to behave with each other at work? It has been proposed that the way people frame an ethical issue a priori is determinant to the subsequent judgment and behaviour (Bandura, 1999; Sonenshein, 2007; Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012), and calls have been made to better understand how these frames are constituted (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014).

This review from the literature (and the inductive analysis) led to address two research questions:

- 1- How is the quality of relationships shaped in the organisational context?

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<sup>1</sup> The specific case of auto-ethnography questions the distinction I have established between a subjective and an interpretive perspective, and to my view this uniqueness of perspective stands for a significant predicament of this method.

2- How do people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work?

Bringing together ethics and relationships at work allows for enriching both scholarships regarding the following tensions: intuition/reflection, individual/collective and care/instrumentality. First, while the scholarship on ethical behaviours has been criticised for not accounting sufficiently for intuitive processes, as opposed to reflective reasoning (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008), the quality of relationships is expected to encompass a certain degree of affects (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Ferris, *et al.*, 2009) that would feed intuitive processes but not necessarily reflective processes. Second, both scholarships are based in the individual level but call for a better understanding of the role of the collective level (Sonenshein, 2007; Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). The focus of this research is specifically the interplay between individual and collective processes. Third, an ethical perspective on relationships is enhanced by an ethics of care perspective (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993; Tronto, 2010) that allows for questioning the role of instrumentality in the quality of relationships at work. This ethical perspective on relationships considers the concern for a particular other as an end whereas the workplace situates relationships as a means to achieve organisational ends (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009).

Different methodological challenges have been identified to unveil these tensions. A holistic method will be applied so as to confront different standpoints (the participants' and the researcher's), at different levels of analysis (individual and collective), and with different levels of awareness (from conscious to intuitive). Van Maanen and colleagues highlight that 'what seems apparent to those who have carried out organizational research projects is that method can generate and shape theory, just as theory can generate and shape method' (Van Maanen, *et al.*, 2007, p.1146). I will now turn to discussing the empirical method that has been applied in this research.

## CHAPTER 3- From data collection to analysis: an inductive double case study

### Introduction

'The lessons to be learned from the wave of methodological exchanges that the post-millennium decade has brought us are many. One is that different methods shine under different lights and that one should choose the most appropriate data collection technique based on the question being asked and the types of facts and theories one wants to operate with. Another is that substantive innovation often emerges from a fearless orientation toward mixing methods and research genres so as to develop a multidimensional understanding of social phenomena.' (Lamont and Swidler, 2014, p.166)

In their article on methodological pluralism, Lamont and Swidler (2014) argue for pragmatically choosing methods that allow apprehending the complexity of social phenomena. Their argument captures the essence of the methodological approach that pervades this research, and that I present in this chapter. In the previous chapter the conversation covered theoretical understandings, and thus stayed at an abstracted level. Now I turn to a more realistic account of the research process and will try to give the reader a sense of 'where does the research data come from' and 'how were they gathered and analysed'. This research adopted an inductive qualitative approach of two in-depth cases. In-depth qualitative studies have been deemed particularly suitable for answering 'how' types of questions (Sonenshein, 2009) and for subsequent theory building (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

The data collected between July 2014 and May 2016 are summarised in Table 1 below (mainly from July 2014 to March 2015, and one complementary visit in March 2016 at Serv, and May 2016 at Comms, to discuss research findings).

| Method              | Activities   | Material collected  | Analysis                                     |
|---------------------|--|---|--|
| Direct observations | Serv: 118 hours over 20 months, pictures taken of the offices, institutional documents<br>Comms: 210 hours over 20 months, pictures taken of the offices, work documents, emails | Serv: 73 pages field notes single-spaced, docs stored in Nvivo<br>Comms: 98 pages field notes single-spaced; docs stored in Nvivo | Coding in Nvivo (grounded theory techniques) |
| Video recording     | Serv: 4h30 videos + 4h20 audio only<br>Comms: 2h40 videos + 3h10 audio only  | Detailed notes including selective transcriptions<br>Serv: 50 pages<br>Comms: 41 pages  |  |
| Interviews          | Serv: 13 interviews (average duration: 52mn)<br>Comms: 33 interviews (average duration: 52mn)  | Full transcripts  | Coding in Nvivo (grounded theory techniques) |
| Questionnaires      | Serv: 45 questionnaires<br>Comms: 95 questionnaires  | Questionnaires (inferred words, closed questions)   | Statistical analysis (SPSS)                  |

Table 1: Summary of the data collected

In this chapter, I first present the general research design, i.e. a double-case study with multidimensional tools (ethnographic observations, interviews, and questionnaires). Second, I present the research settings, Comms and Serv. Third, I narrate the story of how access to the empirical material has been granted, which is important to assess the quality of the data collected and also marks the beginning of the analysis. Fourth, I present the analytical approach of the research. Finally, I discuss the epistemic significance of the cases as a limitation of the research method.

## **I- Enhancing richness of empirical material: a double-case study with multidimensional tools**

Scholars have emphasised needs to better account for the context to understand how the quality of relationships is constructed (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011) and how people become aware of ethical issues in organisations (Sonenshein, 2007; De Cremer, *et al.*, 2010; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). To achieve this objective, Trevino and colleagues (2014) call for an empirical research more anchored in the field. In this research, it is assumed that the complexity of the individual and collective processes through which the organisational context is perceived and enacted in everyday behaviours cannot be apprehended in experimental settings. Hence, the empirical method of this research is naturalistic.

Researchers who choose to study ethical issues in a context go to the field for ethnographies (Gordon, *et al.*, 2009; Bañada-Hirèche, *et al.*, 2011; Perezts, *et al.*, 2011) or case studies (Sonenshein, 2009; Gehman, *et al.*, 2013; Seidel, *et al.*, 2013) comprising a set of methods among interviews, document analysis, observations and surveys. In-depth case studies, in particular, have been recognised for their capacity to answer 'how' types of questions (Sonenshein, 2009; Yin, 2014). For a richer analysis, I chose to study two cases in-depth instead of one. The research project has been limited to two cases because it seemed to be the maximum number of cases that could be handled in the time frame of the PhD. Hence, I chose two in-depth case studies as a way to manage the trade-off between the width and the depth of empirical analyses. I analyse how the phenomenon unfolds in each case which allows for contrasting and comparing so as to build stronger theory. Ideally, it would have been relevant to consider a larger number of case studies, but then, it would not have been possible to study them in great depth. Leonard-Barton (1990) expresses forcefully this necessary trade-off, asserting that 'the more that the in-depth, real-time longitudinal study approximates a true ethnographic, participant-observation methodology, the more the researcher sacrifices efficiency for richness of data' (p.255).

To enhance the richness of data, I have applied different tools that allow capturing the object of study under different dimensions. I present these different tools in this section: ethnographic observations (including direct observations and video recordings), interviews, and questionnaires.

### **A multiplicity of tools for a multidimensional object**

The phenomena at the focus of this research – the quality of work relationships and the underlying ethical issue – are occurring at different levels of analysis. Following Sonenshein (2007) and Stephens et al. (2011), three features of the data to be collected have been identified: the temporality of processes – episodic vs on-going –, the level of cognition –reflective vs intuitive – and the social level – individual vs collective. Accordingly, four different methodological tools – observations, videos, interviews, and questionnaires – are proposed to address this multidimensionality. Table 2 below summarises how these different tools are covering the multiple

dimensions. I do not mean here that these are universal attributes of each method, but I only mean to expose the way I use them in this particular research.

|                | Temporal        |                 | Cognitive         |                  | Social            |                   |
|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
|                | <i>Episodic</i> | <i>On-going</i> | <i>Reflective</i> | <i>Intuitive</i> | <i>Individual</i> | <i>Collective</i> |
| Observations   | XX              | XX              | XX                | XX               | XX                | XX                |
| Interviews     | X               | XXX             | XXX               | X                | XXX               | X                 |
| Videos         | XXX             |                 | XX                | XX               | XX                | XX                |
| Questionnaires |                 | XXX             | X                 | XX               | X                 | XXX               |

Table 2: Capacity of each method to cover different dimensions

### *Temporal dimensions*

The perspective taken in this research is that nothing is ever static and only appears to be given the time perspective taken (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Hernes, 2014). The objective of the research is precisely to unveil how the quality of work relationships and the ethical issue that underpins it have been constructed. Hence, the empirical material should be able to capture events, happening in the moment, but also trends lasting over longer periods of time.

Direct observations are appropriate to grasp both immediacy and evolution, providing the right temporal sampling (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). However, since relationships unfold over years, the ideal temporal sampling here would span several years, which is not compatible with the time frame of the PhD. Hence, interviews will complement the observations since people can talk about events in the past and describe the evolution of a phenomenon over time.

The immediacy will be apprehended through observations and videos, following the tradition of the study of symbolic interaction (Goffman, 1972; Goffman, 1986). There is only so much that can be seen and noted in real time by an observer. Hence, videos will complement observations for analysing micro-level of interactions. Videos are considered episodic zooms that allow for rigorous focus on the complexity of micro-interactions, which is hard to catch in real-time observations (Heath, *et al.*, 2010).

### *Cognitive levels*

A critical feature of the researched phenomena is that it occurs at different cognitive levels from intuitive-automatic to reflective-controlled

(Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Reynolds, *et al.*, 2010). Interviews are the typical research method to capture what people think consciously. However, interviewees can only tell what is verbally accessible to them, that is to say, the result of reflective cognitive processes. Capturing intuitive processes has been qualified as particularly challenging (Dane and Pratt, 2007; Uhlmann, *et al.*, 2012). Questionnaires have been designed to complement this shortage. Partially Structured Attitude measures have been developed (Vargas, *et al.*, 2004) as an implicit measure of interactional behaviour (Uhlmann, *et al.*, 2012). This survey method consists of asking people to rate the ethicality of other people's behaviour (in the form of small scenarios), and this measure supposedly reflects their own behaviour. These measures have not been exploited in this research because the small number of respondents in one of the two settings did not allow validating the measures. However, two of these scenarios have been used as an introduction in the interviews and have been part of the qualitative analysis. Furthermore, a measure of the social representation of 'work' has also been included and exploited in the analysis. Social representations allow capturing cognitions on a social object, and they are implicit guides for action (Moscovici, 1961).

The intuitive aspects of the phenomenon at hand have also been unveiled in the analysis through the confrontation between observations and interviews. This point will be developed in the last section of this chapter.

### *Social levels*

Finally, the research is framed in the interaction between the individual and the collective levels. Hence, the empirical material has to overlap both levels of analysis. Observation methods (including direct observations and videos) have the advantage to be holistic, meaning that they do not have to focus on one level of analysis (Heath, *et al.*, 2010; Guest, *et al.*, 2012). However, both observations and interviews are limited regarding the number of people and of social groups that can be observed and interviewed. On the contrary, the survey has the ability to reach a larger number of people, and thus will complement the perspective of this 'small N-study' (Tsoukas, 2009).

## **Ethnographic observations**

Ethnography refers to 'highly descriptive writing about particular groups of people' (Silverman, 2007, p.12). I am hesitant to define this piece of research as ethnography because the writing from observations in the field is modest (see chapters 4 and 5). However, significant features of ethnography are borrowed. Most importantly, the researcher is considered a measurement tool, and the objective is to try to see things 'afresh' (Silverman, 2007, p.18). The capacity to see the strange in the mundane is particularly important as this research focuses on casual, everyday behaviours. There was no specific set of questions a priori to the observation. I aimed at broadly looking at the following themes: the organisation's formal and informal structures (activity, missions, hierarchy) and the practices and beliefs pertaining to the relationships at work (how people interact, when, with whom, for which purpose). New questions arose during the fieldwork and led to orient the observation to specific persons, places and events. I will develop this process in the next sections of this chapter.

I refer to ethnographic observations both for direct observations, and video recording. A large range of frames for interaction (Goffman, 1986) have been observed such as work meetings, greetings, one-to-one work collaboration, mentoring, get-togethers, coffee breaks, etc. A summary of the observation activities is presented in Table 3. The main objective of videos was to record micro-level of interaction. Only meetings (team meetings, project meetings or one-to-one collaborations) have been video recorded as the participants were reluctant to video recording and this was the compromise that had been decided during access negotiation. Nevertheless, videos complemented direct observations because they allowed zooming in (Nicolini, 2009). Moreover, videos orient the attention of the researcher to different matters and thus yield different research findings (Mengis, *et al.*, 2016).

| Month          | Day           | Org   | Entity                                      | Activity   |
|----------------|---------------|-------|---|--|
| July 2014      | 23rd          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Arrangement of the fieldwork. Presentation of COMMS from Consulting Manager. Consulting's meeting on client N.   |
|                | 24th          | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Client A project meeting (Consulting and Advertising). Visit of the 9th floor.   |
|                | 29th          | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office. Consulting's meeting to prepare a client D meeting to come. Client A project meeting (Consulting and Advertising)   |
|                | 30th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office.   |
|                | 31st          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office.   |
| August 2014    | 1st           | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office. Consulting's team meeting ( <b>videorecorded</b> ).   |
|                | 11th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office. Observations in Consulting Manager office.  |
|                | 12th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Consulting's meeting on client M.   |
|                | 13th          | Comms | Public Relations                            | Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office.  |
|                | 25th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Arrangement of the fieldwork. Meeting for the renewal of a 'young adult contract'. Introduction to different persons in the team. Observation in Marie-Claire's office. Lunch with the team. Meeting for the creation of a 'young adult contract'. Mediated visit. |
|                | 26th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Team meeting. Lunch with Nathalie. Synthesis meeting. Meeting with a foster family. Observation in Marie-Claire's office.  |
|                | 27th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Observation in Alexia's office. Meeting with parents and child. Meeting for a new hosting project.   |
|                | 28th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Observation in Gilles' office. Meeting work time Alexia ( <b>videorecorded</b> ). Judge hearing.   |
|                | 29th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Observation in Alexia's office.  |
| September 2014 | 8th           | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office.   |
|                | 9th           | Comms | Public Relations                            | Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office.  |
|                | 10th          | Comms | Public Relations-Consulting                 | Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office. Consulting's meeting on client M. Workshop at client M's offices with the Consulting team.   |
|                | 11th          | Comms | Public Relations                            | Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office.  |
|                | 22nd          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Meeting work time Marie-Claire ( <b>videorecorded</b> ). Meeting work time child. Lunch with team. Meeting new placement. Synthesis meeting. Observations in Laura's office.   |
|                | 23rd          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Meeting work time Maelle. Lunch with team. Meeting work time child. Synthesis meeting. Observations in Laura's office.   |
|                | 24th          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Meeting work time child. Lunch with the team. Meeting young adult. Synthesis meeting. Observations in Laura's office.  |
|                | 25th          | Serv  | Social Work-Secretariat                     | Team meeting ( <b>videorecorded</b> ). Lunch with the team. Practice analysis group.   |
|                | 26th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office.   |
|                | 30th          | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Consulting's meeting on client G. Consulting's conference call with a prospect. Improvised meeting at Consulting-Advertising on client G.   |
| October 2014   | 1st           | Comms | Advertising - Consulting - Public Relations | Client A Workshop on 9th floor with Advertising and Consulting. Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office.  |
|                | 2nd           | Comms | Public Relations                            | Observations in Public Relations' open-plan office. Breakfast social gathering.  |
|                | 7th           | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Client A work meeting (Consulting and Advertising). Observations in Consulting Manager office. Client A work meeting (Consulting and Advertising).  |
|                | 8th           | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Consulting conference call with client M. Second Client A work meeting (Consulting and Advertising) ( <b>videorecorded</b> )   |
|                | 9th           | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office.   |
|                | 10th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office. Consulting's team meeting ( <b>videorecorded</b> ). Short point on client G ( <b>videorecorded</b> )  |
|                | 22nd          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Consulting meeting on client A. Consulting meeting on client N. Observations in Consulting's open plan office.  |
|                | 23rd          | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Creative meeting on client A (Advertising and Consulting). Visit of 5th floor.  |
|                | 24th          | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Observations in Consulting's open-plan office. Consulting lunch. Creative meeting on client A (Advertising and Consulting).   |
|                | November 2014 | 3rd   | Comms                                       | Consulting-Public Relations  |
| 4th            |               | Comms | Consulting-Advertising                      | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Work meeting on client A (Advertising and Consulting) ( <b>videorecorded</b> ). Second Client A work meeting (Consulting and Advertising).  |
| 5th            |               | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Advertising (5th floor). Observations in Consulting's open-plan office.  |
| 6th            |               | Comms | Advertising-Consulting                      | Observations in Advertising (5th floor). Observations in Consulting manager office.  |
| December 2014  | 29th          | Serv  | Secretariat                                 | Observations in Alizée's office. Observations in Maelle's office.  |
|                | 30th          | Serv  | Secretariat                                 | Commuting with Maelle. Observations in Laura's office. Office annual lunch. Observations in Alizée's office.   |
| March 2015     | 22nd          | Serv  | Social Work                                 | Observations in Raphaëlle's office. Lunch with the team. Service project meeting.  |
|                | 23rd          | Serv  | Social Work-Secretariat                     | Team meeting including research feedback ( <b>audiorecorded</b> ). Lunch with the team. Observations in Maryline's office. Observations in Alizée's office.  |
| March 2016     | 29th          | Serv  | Secretariat-Social Work                     | Commuting with Gilles. Team meeting including research feedback ( <b>audiorecorded</b> ). Lunch with the team. Observations in Laura's office.   |
| May 2016       | 23rd          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Client B conference call.   |
|                | 24th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office  |
|                | 25th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting's open-plan office (new). Feedback meeting with HR Director ( <b>audiorecorded</b> ). Feedback meeting with Consulting team ( <b>audiorecorded</b> ). Lunch with consulting team. Observations in Consulting Manager office.            |
|                | 26th          | Comms | Consulting                                  | Observations in Consulting Manager office. Consulting work meeting on new business. Consulting work meeting on innovation.   |

Table 3: Synthesis of observations

I spent 330 hours of observations (210 hours at Comms and 118 hours at Serv) over 20 months, which included an intense period of fieldwork from July to December 2014, with two follow-up visits at Serv (March 2015 and March 2016) and one follow-up visit at Comms (May 2016). Other informal interactions also happened with the gatekeepers (Gilles<sup>2</sup> at Serv and Natacha at Comms) during and after the observation. I video recorded more than 7 hours of meetings and audio recorded another 7 hours of meetings. The video and audio recordings are also reported in Table 3. This required a constant renegotiation of access (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016), which is explained in the next section.

## **Interviews**

The interviews were an efficient complement to the observations. While the interview situation is a research artefact, and thus does not allow capturing an activity that would have been going on without the researcher (Potter and Hepburn, 2005), they allow capturing a rich empirical material on how people are thinking about relationships at work. However, the interview situation follows the social rules of conversational practice (Goffman, 1986) and required particular attention to yield the expected material. First, interviews were rather unstructured so as to allow for the free expression on the research topic. This latitude offered to the interviewees aimed at avoiding desirability bias. I tried to keep a neutral attitude towards the object of study in order to avoid the interviewees' attempt to provide an answer that they perceived as expected. This is particularly important in the field of ethical behaviours that raises issues of social desirability bias (Crane, 1999). Hence, the interviews started with two short scenarios of everyday workplace interactions, inspired from partially structured attitude measures (Vargas, *et al.*, 2004; Uhlmann, *et al.*, 2012). The scenarios are presented in Appendix A (translated in English). They allowed introducing the topic of the good way to behave with each other at work and triggering a broad range of associated comments and topics. Scenario 1 described a manager's practice of greeting people but not enquiring about how they were doing. Scenario 2 described the hesitation of a team

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<sup>2</sup> All the names of the research participants have been modified as part of the measures of confidentiality enforcement.

member to offer help to an underperforming colleague who showed signs of stress. The conversation expanded along the central question 'According to you, what do you think is the appropriate way to behave with each other at work?' Other topics helped people expressing their thinking about this question. For instance, many people answered this question by starting comparing with other workplaces from their past experience. Hence, I started to ask people directly about their background and very often it led to rich insights about relationships at work. An outline of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix B. The interview schedule presents the common denominator of all interviews. All the questions presented in the interview schedule were systematically addressed although they did not necessarily necessitate a formal question. Many interviewees addressed the topic spontaneously, following their own line of reasoning and I did not have to ask the specific question, but I simply had to show interest so as to encourage the interviewee to keep developing the topic. Moreover, in most interviews, more topics were covered than the ones presented in the interview schedule. For instance, many people compared work relationships with nonwork relationships, and I encouraged them to expand their thought (e.g. 'How come you make the distinction?' or 'What the difference then?'). However, this question was not systematically covered in all interviews.

Second, the situation of the interview was worked out so as to make the person comfortable. Importantly, the interviewees knew me before the interview since I started my relationship with them by observations. Hence, they were enthusiastic about the interview, despite sometimes feeling hesitant about the time that they could allocate to this extra work activity. When respondents seemed less comfortable, I used a few easy questions or comments to help the person enjoy the interview. For instance, the question about past experiences was usually a topic that people enjoyed sharing.

Moreover, since the objective was for the interviewee to disclose how she or he makes sense of the organisational context, interviews took place in the organisation. The location is an important feature of the quality of interviews (Herzog, 2005). Only one of the interviews took place in a restaurant instead of inside the office building. This interview was taken out of the corpus eventually because the recording was inaudible (all interviews were

audio recorded), but in any case, the content was not satisfying. It was clear that the person did not try to fit the research topic.

| Organisati<br>on | Team/Dpt            | Name         | Gender  | Status  | Years at<br>COMMS | Length of the<br>interview (mn) |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|---------|---------|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Comms            | Advertising         | Sixtine      | F       | Manager | 10                | 54                              |
|                  |                     | Raphael      | M       | Senior  | 6                 | 50                              |
|                  |                     | Bjorn        | M       | Senior  | 3                 | 55                              |
|                  |                     | Michel       | M       | Manager | 25                | 23                              |
|                  |                     | Odile        | F       | Manager | 3                 | 64                              |
|                  |                     | Effie        | F       | Junior  | 1,5               | 33                              |
|                  | Consulting          | Ella         | F       | Intern  | 0,5               | 58                              |
|                  |                     | Natacha      | F       | Manager | 7                 | 54                              |
|                  |                     | Paul         | M       | Junior  | 0,25              | 62                              |
|                  |                     | Joséphine    | F       | Junior  | 0,25              | 43                              |
|                  |                     | Pierre       | M       | Senior  | 3                 | 46                              |
|                  |                     | Romain       | M       | Intern  | 0,1               | 30                              |
|                  |                     | François     | M       | Junior  | 0,1               | 63                              |
|                  | Public<br>Relations | Elliott      | M       | Intern  | 0,1               | 74                              |
|                  |                     | Fanny        | F       | Senior  | 14                | 43                              |
|                  |                     | Jennifer     | F       | Junior  | 2                 | 60                              |
|                  |                     | Anne         | F       | Junior  | 0,5               | 35                              |
|                  |                     | Enzo         | M       | Intern  | 0,1               | 27                              |
|                  |                     | Sophie       | F       | Junior  | 1,5               | 55                              |
|                  |                     | Evelyne      | F       | Intern  | 0,1               | 49                              |
|                  |                     | Sandra       | F       | Senior  | 9                 | 55                              |
|                  |                     | Clarisse     | F       | Manager | 7                 | 40                              |
|                  |                     | Sarah        | F       | Senior  | 0,1               | 64                              |
|                  | Other               | Mélanie      | F       | Senior  | 7                 | 88                              |
|                  |                     | Rona         | M       | Manager | 2                 | 43                              |
|                  |                     | Aurélie      | F       | Senior  | 8                 | 52                              |
|                  |                     | Kéro         | F       | Senior  | 7                 | 42                              |
|                  |                     | Luc          | M       | Senior  | 4                 | 25                              |
| Lydia            |                     | F            | Senior  | 0,1     | 39                |                                 |
| Brigitte         |                     | F            | Manager | 16      | 71                |                                 |
| Christiane       |                     | F            | Senior  | 5       | 45                |                                 |
| Serv             | Secretary           | Julien       | M       | Junior  | 0,5               | 89                              |
|                  |                     | Lea          | F       | Junior  | 0,7               | 43                              |
|                  |                     | Arlette      | F       | Senior  | 1                 | 51                              |
|                  | Social Work         | Alizée       | F       | Senior  | 25                | 51                              |
|                  |                     | Gilles       | M       | Manager | 3                 | 42                              |
|                  |                     | Marie-Claire | F       | Senior  | 30                | 52                              |
|                  |                     | Nathalie     | F       | Senior  | 5                 | 59                              |
|                  |                     | Alexia       | F       | Senior  | 3                 | 72                              |
|                  |                     | Maele        | F       | Senior  | 8                 | 37                              |
|                  |                     | Sabine       | F       | Junior  | 1,5               | 42                              |
|                  |                     | Laura        | F       | Senior  | 10                | 54                              |
| Amandine         | F                   | Junior       | 0,5     | 53      |                   |                                 |
| Christine        | F                   | Senior       | 13      | 76      |                   |                                 |
| Raphaëlle        | F                   | Senior       | 0,3     | 48      |                   |                                 |

Table 4: Presentation of interviewees

The number of interviews is important for matters of credibility, but there is no fixed rule about the valid number of interviews (Cassell, 2009). 46 people were interviewed in total between July 2014 and March 2015 (see Table 4 above). At Comms, three departments were selected (Consulting, Public Relations and Advertising) and a few other people working with these departments were also interviewed. 33 employees at Comms were interviewed. One interview was excluded from the corpus because the recording was not audible, leaving 32 interviews: 8 respondents from Consulting, 8 respondents from Public Relations, 6 respondents from Advertising, and 10 respondents from other departments working directly with one of the three departments. Attention was given to interviewing people of different gender, age, years of work experience, and different levels of responsibility (managers, top managers, seniors, juniors, interns). At Serv, everybody who was employed in the service between July 2014 and March 2015 was interviewed, except for a temporary worker who arrived in February 2015. 13 employees were interviewed: 10 respondents from the 'Social Work' team, including the manager and a psychologist, and 3 respondents from the secretary team.

## **Questionnaires**

The questionnaires were intended to gather evidence on collective constructs in the organisations that pertain to the organisational culture (Smircich, 1983). The objective was to evaluate the relational culture in both organisations, i.e. the importance of relationships at work, and whether people treated each other with respect, consideration, dignity, and were caring for each other. The questionnaire is available in Appendix C (translated in English).

### *Social representation of work*

Social representations are a set of socially constructed and shared cognitions, which constitute a reading grid for the apprehension of reality (Moscovici, 1961). They are guides for action. Social representations refer to the collective construction of a mental representation of an object that has social stakes (Abric, 2011a). As a result of this process, this object will be associated cognitively with elements on which the individual will be able to

draw to construct his perception of the object in the situation. Social representations give meaning to the real, according to the finality of the situation, according to individual and collective history, and according to the social position of the individual (Abric, 2011a).

Social representations determine practices (Abric, 2011b). People draw on the elements of the representation to determine how to interact with it. Hence, the social representation of 'Work' is useful for this research because it should contribute to unveiling the place of co-workers in the practice of work. A verbal association task will be administered. The task consists of listing in order the first things that come to mind when thinking about 'work'.

#### *Measures of relational culture*

Several measures have been included in the questionnaire to gather pieces of evidence on how people interact with each other in both organisations. However, I will only present the measures that are exploited for this research, i.e. a measure of the caring climate. The questionnaire comprised measures of the 'caring' dimension of the ethical climate scale developed by Victor and Cullen (1988). This included statements such as 'In this company, people look out for each other's good' where respondents had to express their agreement or disagreement on a 7 point -scale.

Finally, respondents had to indicate their gender, age category, number of years in the organisation, position (intern, assistant, executive, manager, and top manager) and their department or team in the organisation.

#### *Procedure*

The questionnaire was administered through Qualtrix as a web survey. 95 persons at Comms filled in the questionnaire (out of around 600 employees) in October 2014. It was sent to the whole organisation by Natacha, the gatekeeper at Comms. At Serv, 11 people filled in the questionnaire in November 2014, sent by Gilles, the gatekeeper at Serv.

#### *Limitations*

The low number of employees at Serv did not allow for a proper measure of the different constructs. I decided to extend the survey to other entities of children protection services in May 2015. However, the results

indicated that each entity yielded different results which meant that the measured phenomenon was proper to Serv entity and could not be extended to other entities providing the same service in the local area. Hence, it was decided to only keep Serv's data for the analysis.

## **II-Research setting: introducing Comms and Serv**

In this section, I will introduce the two organisations that constituted the research setting, Comms and Serv. I will then comment on the suitability of these cases for answering the research questions.

### **Comms**

Comms is a communication agency with offices in the heart of Paris. It is a French subsidiary of a global corporation and has a few hundred employees. It was considered quite large compared to the numerous small communication agencies that populate this sector in France. It encompasses many different entities, all related to communication and advertising. All the entities are situated physically in the same building in the centre of Paris. The organisation is changing continuously. It has settled in this building for less than three years, and units keep moving regularly inside the building according to the extension or downsizing of specific units. Some entities are more profitable than others, and strategic moves are then made to merge different units or create new ones. However, inside the world of communication agencies, Comms was allegedly seen as a slow mover, more settled than its competitors, with older staff, and few exciting brands to manage. Within Comms, three particular entities were researched: Consulting, Public Relations and Advertising.

### *Consulting*

The consulting department advises clients on their branding and communicating strategy. In practice, their activity consists of looking for new contracts and conducting consulting missions that can be limited such as running a few workshops with a board of Directors on the communication strategy, or much larger like co-elaborating the communication strategy of

multinational groups. The latter kind of mission led Consulting to work on projects with many other entities of Comms, so as to accompany the client in the subsequent advertising and public relations campaigns. They are doing intense intellectual work with top management teams of clients, and they are working closely with the General Manager of Comms, who directly takes part in many of the missions. Clients expect a reactive service, and usually people are working until the last minute, finishing a presentation half an hour before effectively displaying it.

In 2014 when the observation started, the team was very new and the turnover very high. At that time, this small entity (5-7 people) had to prove its reason-to-be. The manager of the team had years of experience in Comms, but the other members had been working there for a year or less, on temporary contracts or in internships. Members were all quite young, in their early twenties to early thirties, and they came from prestigious educational French paths, usually with an international background as well (previous work experiences, or study abroad). The manager had her own office, but the rest of the team was on a bench (a bunch of desks) in a large open-plan office. During the visit of spring 2016, the team had moved to a smaller open-plan, sharing a wall with the Consulting manager, and another with the General Manager. But at that time, only two persons, including the manager, remained from the previous team from a year and a half before.

### *Public Relations*

Public Relations is a slightly bigger unit with 10 persons or more. Their job is to help clients manage their public image. This requires connecting with journalists, almost exclusively on the phone, and sometimes writing press releases, for which they also had assistance from another team in their department who was dedicated to content writing. A lot of activity revolves around communicating, either taking information from different sources, or sending information, either written or oral. Employees in Public Relations spend significant time on the phone with journalists and clients. They have some projects with other departments in Comms but rarely the consulting and advertising departments. On the overall, they do not leave their desks very often. Moreover, their time scale can be tight. Clients can ask for projects to be accomplished within a day or less.

The people that compose the team are of different ages and levels of experience, from a very young intern (21 years old) to middle-aged seniors with 15 years of experience in Public Relations. The educational background is high education but not from first-rate institutions. They are all sitting in an open plan office dedicated to their team, including their manager. Turnover was particularly high during the period of observation, with several people leaving at the same time, which led many people to worry about the future of the service.

### *Advertising*

Finally, the advertising department is responsible for elaborating and selling the advertising ideas to the clients for their communication campaigns. The job is overwhelming, and people seem to be very committed to their tasks, even if the word 'task' does not really capture the way they provide the service. They emphasise playfulness as a necessary feature of the work, especially for the creative people. Advertising comprises three subunits: creative people, salespeople, and strategic planners. The creative unit is composed of 'creative people'. They are usually young and have a diverse and often artistic educational background. They are the ones producing the 'ideas'. The salespeople handle the clients directly and have the difficult job of interfacing clients' needs and creative people's work. This is particularly hard because the creative people are often aiming at creating original artistic production that will allow them to win prizes, whereas the most appealing ideas are not necessarily the most efficient regarding clients' sales. Finally, there is the strategic planning service that is responsible for providing the brand strategies on which creative people and salespeople will be able to sit their work. The strategic people can have different backgrounds but they usually have high educational paths.

The offices dedicated to Advertising are in the most central place in the building. Spaces are large, reminiscent of a cosy loft, the furniture is fancy, original, or vintage. Some of the offices display funny or artful decorations, related to clients' brands or to other cultural objects (movies, celebrities, and so on). People also wear fashionable, original clothes. Even senior managers can wear blue jeans with sneakers and a jumper. Everything is informal, the way people are dressed, the way they sit, and even their working hours. The

number of people in the department only amounts to a quarter of the total company, however, in people's minds, it is central to what Comms is all about. For instance, out of the 40 portraits on the company website, 25 represent people from the advertising department.

## **Serv**

Serv is a small, public child protection service in a 20 000 inhabitants city in the French countryside. The service is one of the three child protection services run by the local authority (French 'Conseil Général'). It covers an area that has a low density of population and is larger than the one covered by the two other services in the local authority. As a result, the social workers of Serv spend a lot of time travelling to appointments (to visit parents, children or foster families).

The team consists of six social workers, three secretaries, a psychologist and the head of service. For a large part of the year, there is also an intern or apprentice. In 2014 when the fieldwork began, the head of service had been there for three years but had twenty years of experience in child protection services. The members of the team are of different ages, ranging from early twenties to early sixties. The three secretaries are of different profiles, and have years of experience in child protection as several of them come from other social services. When the observation started, two secretaries had arrived a few months before, but the social workers had been there for years, even the person on temporary contracts because her contract was renewed regularly. Many changes occurred in the team during the period of observation due to two retirements and two maternity leaves (prolonged with parental leaves). Moreover, when a permanent staff member is on maternity leave, she is replaced by a temporary worker who does not necessarily stay for long in the service. Even retired people are first replaced by temporary workers, who will be replaced by permanent contracts after a few months. Hence, there has been a high turnover in the team during the 18 months of observation.

Serv's offices are in a common two-storey building near the city centre. The presence of Serv is not clearly indicated as they occupy a small surface within a building dedicated to other social services of the local authority. Serv's

offices consist of five rooms on the first floor. The head of service and the psychologist both have their own offices; the head of service even has a small round table in his office, next to his large desk. The three secretaries share a large office with two windows, but their office seems crowded as they have many storage cupboards and shelves, as well as the printers of the service. The social workers share two offices, but rarely are all three in the room at the same time as two of them have other offices in other locations (each in different cities, closer to their home but also covering a different area), and three of them are working part-time.

National laws on child protection tightly regulate the work at Serv. The law defines the mandatory missions of the service and the different measures they can take. The Children's Judge decides whether a child is held in custody of the child protection services, and thus rules many children's situations. However, within this regulated structuring, the service is also shaped by the political decisions of the local authority. The local authority organises the service, which includes the localisation of the service, the funding of the service (number of workers, offices, partnerships with foster families and hosting venues) and the non-mandatory missions. Non-mandatory missions refer to voluntary collaboration with the parents to receive help from the service to protect their child. The service benefits from the prestige of implementing justice rulings. Their actions do not only originate from the rulings but contribute actively to these rulings by the evaluation of the situation that they elaborate and communicate to the Judge.

Another significant feature of Serv's work constitutes the many partners they work with. Each child's situation necessitates specific partnerships. The first partners are the ones hosting the child, so often foster families, but also other foster venues, or a combination of different venues for the week, for the weekend, for the holidays, sometimes even including the parents. Other partners consist of medical and social services, especially their prevention counterparts in social services. Interestingly, Serv employees rarely work with their counterparts in child protection services in nearby areas. Only the secretaries and the head of service who have some administrative responsibilities, have frequent contacts with the central public services.

In their everyday work, they are confronted with and have to deal with social, financial, and psychological hardship. Hardship in the children's situations is striking and is sometimes difficult for Serv's workers to handle.

### **Rationale for the choice of the research settings: purposive sampling**

The choice of the two organisations in which the data gathering would take place can be summarised through two apparently opposite features: representative and diverse. As the ultimate objective was to be able to say something about workplaces in general (Tsoukas, 2009), work organisations that resemble prototypical workplaces in terms of frames for interaction (Goffman, 1986) were chosen. The prototypical frame for interaction consists in workplaces with employees, identifiable teams and work roles, hierarchical structures, and existing physical offices. The two organisations that have been the object of research fields, Comms and Serv, correspond to this description.

Moreover, importantly, these two organisations were chosen to offer a productive contrast for theory building. Initially I meant to study one 'business-as-usual' organisation with much pressure on the bottom line, and one 'public service' with no pressure on the bottom line. As the method is inductive, the differences relevant for the theory that is built in this research appeared along the way. Actually, the differences between the two cases are precisely the critical features that oriented the exact theories that are addressed: the quality of work relationships and the construction of the ethical issue of care. While employees at Serv were able to sustain supportive relationships, at Comms employees sustained convivial but not supportive relationships. Moreover, at Serv most individuals were able to raise the ethical issue of conflicting responsibilities between the work and the worker, while at Comms no such moral tension was raised. This contrast is at the foundation of the theoretical contribution claimed in this research (Yin, 2014).

#### *Commonalities and differences*

The two organisations were chosen to represent two different approaches regarding profit objectives. While Comms would be a business-as-usual organisation, with much concern for the bottom line figures, Serv as a

public administration, would be unconcerned about generating profit. My intuition was that the overarching objective of profit-making might be a critical feature underlying the possibilities for relationships. Actually, this feature of for-profit or not-for-profit appeared not to be so critical. What was critical was the performance pressure. At Comms, employees felt a high pressure to sell services to clients and to improve the bottom line, while at Serv employees felt a high pressure to take care of children in need with limited resources due to a tight budget. In both cases the effect of pressure on work relationships was similar. The critical aspects that distinguished Comms and Serv in their construction of the quality of work relationships were not directly related to profit. The analysis revealed different processes that could lead to raising or not raising awareness of the ethical issue of conflicting responsibilities between caring for the work and caring for the other person at work.

Commonalities and differences are presented in Table 5 below. Both organisations undergo important pressure on the economic performance, i.e. being profitable for shareholders in the case of Comms and saving the taxpayers money in the case of Serv. Moreover, they both had pressure on direct work performance, coming either from their responsibility to the clients (in the case of the marketing agency) or towards the children in care (in the case of social services). Finally, both organizations represent traditional office work, i.e. day work hours, individual office furniture, work tasks organised by person and by team, etc. The differences between the two organizations that matter for the study of co-worker relationships morality are their different temporal perspective and their awareness to the question of worker's wellbeing. Comms is a business-as-usual organisation and focuses on short term outcomes. Comms employees are well-educated people with good social skills but they do not have particular knowledge about care and wellbeing; they do not seem concerned with the relevance of these issues in the workplace either. On the contrary, SERV's mission is social care, which includes knowledge and practice of what determines children's wellbeing. They are concerned with the social and psychological development of children over years.

|                               | Comms   | Serv  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Commonalities</b>          |   |   |
| Pressure on performance       | Pressure for providing good work<br>Competitive market with clients satisfaction as definitive assessment   | Pressure for providing good work<br>Children and families wellbeing depends on their ability to understand the situation and take the appropriate measures  |
| Economic constraints          | Tight budget<br>Limited recruitment possibilities and immediate lay-offs according to contracts failures  | Tight budget<br>Strict ratio of number of children in foster care per staff   |
| Work configuration            | Traditional office work<br>Day work with flexible hours<br>Some appointments outside but mostly in-office work<br>Work organised in project teams | Traditional office work<br>Day work with flexible hours<br>Regular appointments outside but anchor point in office<br>Individual responsibilities but pervasive team work                         |
| <b>Differences</b>            |   |   |
| Temporal perspective          | Short term<br>Responsiveness within a week is the general rule.<br>Rare long term commitment from clients<br>High employees turnover              | Long term<br>While emergencies happen, overall the work is planned over several months<br>Improving developmental perspectives of children over years<br>Mostly permanent staff with low turnover |
| Awareness to wellbeing issues | Lay-person knowledge<br>Well-educated people but no specific knowledge about well-being for the job   | Professional knowledge<br>Tackling mental health issues as part of the job  |

Table 5: Commonalities and differences between Comms and Serv

### III- Negotiating access: research quality and ethical considerations

The choices that we make while gaining and maintaining access 'have consequences in terms of our relationships with research participants, our sense of self, our personal integrity and credibility, and our ability to publish our work' (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016, p.555). Here, I will endeavour to explain the tricks of the trade (Becker, 1998) that allowed me to navigate the research field. Compromises have been made between the initial research design and the real-life fieldwork. Exposing and reflecting on these choices has significant consequences for research quality (Van Maanen, *et al.*, 2007; Hibbert, *et al.*, 2014) and for research ethics (Sampson, *et al.*, 2008; Gilmore and Kenny, 2015).

I will discuss in this section how I gained and maintained access both at Comms and at Serv. I will also show how the seeds of analysis oriented the data collection. I will reflect on my positioning in the field and my relationship

with the research participants. Finally, I will conclude this section with further reflections on my difficulties recognising ethical issues in the field.

### **A small step for me but a big step for the research project**

#### **Vignette 1**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Gaining access at Comms: Riding the roller coaster'

My friend Natacha, when talking about my research, mentioned that it might be interesting for me to come study her organisation. I didn't know the communication activity as a business and I was worried about what I could bring to the organisation in exchange for the time that I would require from them. But I knew through their activities that they were interested in social sciences. Another reason why I thought I might obtain access at Comms was that I knew my friend working there was at a good level of responsibility in the organisation. I knew she had spent many years there and had been very quickly promoted.

Later I also found out that the General Manager had a daughter working in research in social sciences, which naturally might have determined her positive attitude toward my proposition. Consequently, in mid-May it seemed that it was a done deal. But things went unexpectedly complicated by the long silence of the Human Resources Director (whose official approval was required by the General Manager). I did not understand why she could not take a few minutes to take charge of the file, which mainly consisted of reading the one and a half pages I had written about the project and sending me an email or calling me to either agreeing, or refusing, or inquiring further details, but in any case she remained stubbornly too busy to do anything about it, despite the repeated reminders from Natacha.

That a company like Comms would not agree to a demand from a researcher in social sciences to come into the building to inquire about interactions at work, was perfectly understandable from my point of view. It was quite removed from any business preoccupations that might be disturbing. But on the contrary, it could also be argued that an organisation might always benefit from the reflexivity induced by a research analysis of its social functioning and that it would benefit from a better understanding of the employees' work behaviours, or that it could lead to valuable networking into one of the leading European Business Schools. So I was ready for a discussion of this nature with the Human Resources Director. But it never happened. This high-level manager obviously tried to avoid the topic, possibly hoping that I would let go and find another field at some point. And it almost happened as I was ready to let go, but my friend Natacha was not. In July, I had let go of this field because I did not want to annoy my friend further or put her in any kind of conflict at her workplace and had begun to apply to other organisations, some of which had already appeared favourable, when Natacha called me, the Monday 21th of July to tell me that I could come. So I quickly reviewed my short term holiday plans to grab the opportunity as quickly as possible. Two days later I officially (more or less) began my fieldwork at Comms.

The story of the first access to Comms (see Vignette 1 above) emphasises the interplay between luck and perseverance that it took to be able to first set foot in this company. The first access was a great step forward for the research project as Comms met many of the criteria I envisioned for my fieldwork: a large enough organisation (hundreds in the building), business-as-usual, and in a sector that I was not familiar with, as I wanted to be able to take the distance necessary to see things afresh (Silverman, 2007).

### **Vignette 2**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Gaining access at Serv: taking a chance'

Negotiation for arrival was surprisingly short and easy. My first idea for the non-profit organisation was to find an organisation in the UK, so as to have one organisation in France (the for-profit one) and one organisation in the UK (the non-profit one). But as time was passing and I had not managed to gain access to any organisation, I began to apply more broadly, using different kinds of connections. As a member of my family was working in a child protection service, I discussed with him my research project and the opportunity to do my fieldwork in this public organisation. We settled on a specific entity that could constitute an appropriate opportunity for different reasons: first it was not the entity where he was working (because he felt unease at the idea that I would enter his entity, being a member of his family), and second it was an entity where I could have a quick agreement since it was a bit remote from the central services (and then from the big bosses), and last by not least, the head of service, Gilles, would certainly be on board, considering his personality and his friendship with my relative. And in fact, despite being on holiday at the time the requesting email was sent, he quickly replied, asking me to call him. When I called him our exchange was quite short (a few minutes), only to exchange a bit of information. He just asked for a delay of a few days in order to submit my request to his team during a meeting. He then called me back as promised to tell me that it was ok and to arrange the dates. He did not bother to do any other institutional moves to get authorisation from anybody in the hierarchy, which can seem quite surprising considering that public services are the prototype of structured bureaucracy.

I am not totally sure of the reasons why they accepted so quickly my request and without any formalities. An element that undoubtedly accounted for this easiness is the fact that I was introduced by a member of my family who worked in a similar service in the institution. The head of service knew him personally after having worked with him for twenty years, and some of the members of the team could have encountered him in meetings or commissions very occasionally, but at least they knew he was part of the organisation. Naturally other elements like the desirability of being studied for a research project have certainly accounted for this quick process.

The story of the first access to Serv follows a significantly different path (see Vignette 2 above). In this case, on the contrary, opportunities that had not been thought through opened up by themselves. I aimed at studying a not-for-profit organisation that would constitute one of the two case studies as part of

a multiple case study design (Yin, 2014). In initial plans, I aimed to have access to two mid-size or large organisations so as to be able to have enough material in each, especially regarding the number of potential interviews and questionnaires. However, an opportunity presented itself in a small entity of a child protection service. There was only a team of eleven people, so it did not fit my criteria, but I thought that I could go and see if I needed to find another organisation instead of this one. My backup plan was to stick to one organisation only, and I had already been granted access to Comms. Hence, I went to Serv at the end of August 2014 with low expectations. However, it turned out that I had such great access there that it outweighed the problem of the size. I was able to go to internal meetings and external appointments, and I was being integrated into the social life immediately. Moreover, I sensed that the social care could constitute an interesting setting relative to my research topic. Immediately, some similarities and contrasts with Comms appeared to me, and even if I was not yet sure what it was about, I sensed that there could be something interesting to delve into. Hence, after a few days spent at Serv, I decided that this small entity would play the role of one of the two case studies in my initial research design.

### **Craftsmanship of field research: maintaining access**

'Although we usually do not deliberately set out to deceive our research participants or the organisations we work with, we might do so unintentionally to gain and maintain access' (Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016, p.545)

Once I was confident that I had secured the initial access to the two organisations I would study for this research, new questions arose. The initial demand for access was approximate as it was neither clear to me which teams, persons, projects, I should observe, nor which person I should interview or which document I should collect and which type of interactions I should film. The focus was unclear in the beginning for two interrelated reasons: it had to be adapted to the structures and features of the organisation, and it had to be negotiated while in the field. If I had asked for access from the start to all the empirical material I collected in the end, they would probably have rejected my

proposal right away. It is much easier to ask for access once already there, once there is a direct physical contact that increases trust and the desire to interact with the researcher. Moreover, the purposeful sampling of qualitative inductive analysis took shape as the field research was progressing. When I was writing up my notes, or reading articles in between two visits, I identified areas, topics, and activities that needed a closer inquiry. As a result, on the field, I had to negotiate continuously.

When somebody happened to enter my lens of observation, either because the manager of the team granted me access to sit in his team offices, or because I was accompanying somebody in a meeting where I met new people, I was presenting myself as a researcher and briefly explaining my research topic. In the units that I studied more regularly (Consulting, Public Relations, some specific projects in Advertising, and Serv) I distributed a one-page document that introduced me and the research, and explained what was expected of the research participants, the methodology and type of data that would be collected, as well as their right to leave the study at any time. This informed consent information sheet is presented in Appendix D. The demand for participation never raised any problems. In both organisations, people were interested in the research topic and enthusiast to participate in the research. However, they were more reluctant to give their time or to introduce me to other people. Overall the empirical material that raised the most concern was the video recording.

#### *Explicit and implicit bargaining: the case of filming*

The question of filming epitomises the process of negotiating access while on the field. Filming was the means of data collection that participants were the most reluctant to accept. For instance, I would have liked to put the camera somewhere in a corridor or an office to keep recording for a significant amount of time, but that was not possible because it would become very difficult to check with all the people coming through or stopping by if they would consent to participate in the research. At Comms, they would refuse to bother clients about an academic research project. At Serv, they could not agree to record social service users, because their cases were legally protected by anonymity. Hence, I quickly gave up on this idea. However, I still aimed at filming internal meetings, i.e. including only people who would be fully aware

of the research. I hoped this could help me analyse the underlying microelements in relationships that I would not necessarily be able to capture in real-time. However, even filming internal meetings required a high level of trust. As a result, filming was much more easily granted when I had been there for a few days than when I just started or when I had been away for some time.

At Comms, Natacha, my gatekeeper, stated from the start that I should have official approval from Human Resources Director to be authorised to film. As the latter had been avoiding me, I knew that this would prove difficult, so I did not push the question any further in the beginning. However, the more I spent time there without any incident, or questions, the more my study felt casual to them and they were not concerned about asking authorisation to the HR Director anymore. After a week and a half observation, and after having interviewed most of the people on the Consulting team, I asked if I could film a team meeting. They were not so cheerful about it, however, they accepted gracefully. Interestingly though, I had to be careful about asking to film again so as not to jeopardise the relationship. This was particularly visible at Serv, where the question of filming was even more sensitive as they did not ask for permission from the central services to accept my presence there. I asked for filming in the second week of fieldwork, for an internal meeting that took place on the first day of my week-long visit. The head of service granted this recording, and other participants approved timidly, but I could feel that the request created tension in the atmosphere and I almost regretted asking for it. I did not want them to feel uneasy because of my presence.

When I had obtained the authorisation to film, I tried not to make annoying requests for some time, and I even tried to please the participants as much as possible. On the contrary, there were also things that they were asking from me, like a supplementary visit to share research findings, or for me to meet specific people. Hence, part of the negotiation was also to accept going in directions that the participants were asking me to go. For example, at Comms the question of whether I should attend meetings with clients was sensitive. Interestingly, while I did not push this topic forward as it was not essential to my research, participants were actually the ones insisting. Clients' meetings were an important part of their activity, and they wanted to show them to me. So after a few weeks, they invited me to attend a one-day workshop that they

were having for one of their most important clients. However, I should not present myself as a researcher as they felt it would be too complicated for them to explain to the client. They did not want to look like they would be asking the client for favours. I was not too keen to attend a meeting where I could not disclose my research project, but at the same time, I did not think it was fair to refuse this demand from the participants.

### **Positioning in the field**

My positioning in the field was the result of constant renegotiation between myself, my research, and the participants. Should I participate or not participate in their daily work tasks? To what extent should I disclose myself or engage in purposeful impression management? How personal should be my relationships with participants? These questions were settled in practice by compromising between what I thought was the best for research quality, what I felt was my duty to the participants, and what resources I could possibly allocate there (time, attention, emotion).

I referred to many of these questions in my field notes, both because I thought it could be useful for the subsequent analysis and because I felt morally uneasy and needed to write them down. I will illustrate the entanglement of conflicting objectives and their negotiation in practice with an example: the 'choice' of the level of participation at Comms.

At Comms, it turned out that I did not participate much in their daily work tasks. I could only commit to spending two to four days in a row in the organisation for each visit, and there were some weeks when I did not even come at all. This was due to personal and professional constraints. I did not want to be separated from my children for long periods of time. Also, I had seminars and conferences I wanted to attend at University. Finally, I tried to optimise the cost of travel because I was on a tight budget for my research funding. As a result, I could not take an active part in any project because the way they work at Comms requires being reactive, so very little can be planned more than two days in advance. Hence, as I was not there on a regular basis, I was basically useless as far as potentially participating in their projects. On the one hand, this non-participating position was beneficial to the data collection because it allowed me to have distance to my object of observation, as

detachment has been argued to be an important feature of ethnographic observation (Van Maanen, 2011). Going back and forth allowed me never ‘to go native’. On the other hand, it certainly closed some doors for participating in meetings where they did not invite me, just not thinking that I might be interested. As a nonparticipant observer, my role towards the research participants stayed blurry and uneasy, and I had to constantly re-negotiate access.

### **Ethical awareness in the field**

If ethics is the conscious practice of freedom (Foucault and Rabinow, 1997, p.284) it requires reflexivity to be exercised, i.e. ‘researcher self-consciousness’ (Hibbert, *et al.*, 2014, p.283). During fieldwork, I did not encounter ethical research questions such as the ones that are usually identified in research ethics codes (Bell and Bryman, 2007), but it does not mean that practising the fieldwork did not raise any ethical issue. As Cunliffe and Alcadipani (2016) outline ‘While we often think of these choices as technical ones, in the sense of being tied to “good scientific” research practice such as sampling, rigour, validity, and so on, they are not neutral.’ (p.540). In this field report, I tried not to deal separately with research quality on one side and research ethics on the other side. The complexity of the entanglement between the two is what makes research ethics a complicated practice. As Gordon *et al.* (2009) posit ‘organisational ethics is constructed in and through those micro-practices that shape conduct’ (p.91). Ethics of our research community lies in these ‘nitty-gritty’ arrangements (Langley, 2009, p.412) that empirical researchers have to deal with in practice.

To sum up, the ethical questions that emerged when conducting fieldwork for this research were mainly twofold. First, the question of how much I should be transparent about my role kept coming in the field. If I explained my role and my research to the people that I observed regularly or that I interviewed, often situations happened where it was more difficult to disclose my role, either because I did not have time (e.g. brief encounters in a hallway) or because the people I was with did not wish for me to do so (e.g. with clients). Second, questions arose regularly about whether I should follow my own research agenda or follow the participants’ endeavour to use my

presence. What right did I have to push people to accept my demands? What duties did I have towards the participants of my research? Cunliffe and colleagues (Cunliffe and Karunanayake, 2013; Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016; Cunliffe and Scaratti, 2017) have recently started uncovering the issues that field researchers encounter in practice, however, these questions are still rarely addressed in academic publications.

### **Where to go next: closet analysis**

Sutton describes the closet qualitative analysis that researchers inevitably undertake when doing quantitative research (Sutton, 1997). When doing qualitative research, especially inductive, I believe that the same type of closet qualitative analysis takes place, especially in orienting the 'sampling'. I was constantly trying to evaluate what would be the next most valuable move for the data gathering.

The research approach that has been adopted here can be described as breakdown-sensitive: 'The researcher is open to the possibilities of an unanticipated theme and keen to follow it, even though this is not the initial or primary intent of the study. Possible outcomes could be refinement of theory or suggestions for new lines of inquiry.' (Alvesson and Kaerreman, 2007, p.1277). During the time of fieldwork, this meant that I tried to follow interesting phenomenon, in the sense that it was not what I was expecting (Davis, 1971). For instance, at Comms, I became interested in Consulting team meetings because they seemed to contradict what people were telling me about relationships in the team. Hence, I tried to be with the Consulting team on Friday mornings as much as possible. Another example is that I started to wonder whether what I was observing at Serv was specific to the child protection activity or to the very team of Mouflins. I did not have access to other sites (neither did I have time to start another fieldwork there) but I took opportunities to check this question by interviewing newcomers at Serv who had been working in other entities of child protection services before, and to send out the questionnaires to other entities. Both these elements showed that what I was observing was at the level of the team, and was different in other entities.

#### **IV- The process of analysis from the data collection**

The strategy for analysis has been to work from the data to build theory inductively. However, a specific theoretical framework was guiding the data collection phase and oriented the analysis. Hence, I do not claim to have applied a pure inductive grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). My approach could be characterised as 'abductive' since I used existing rules to guide the discovery (Mantere and Ketokivi, 2013). However, the definition of abduction in research in organisation and management is the site of debates (Reichertz, 2007), so I prefer using the more generic term induction. I adopt here a 'mild' definition of induction, following Eisenhardt and colleagues who consider that 'inductive methods are those approaches through which researchers attempt to generate theory from data' (Eisenhardt, *et al.*, 2016, p.1113).

If the analysis already started during the data collection phase and oriented choices during fieldwork, at the time of fieldwork the greater part of attention was devoted to gathering pieces of evidence for future analysis. Once it seemed that there was 'enough' empirical material to represent a valuable study – especially in the space and time boundaries of the PhD degree – a new phase, more intensive in analysis, was started. Some further empirical material was collected when the analysis-intensive phase started. Follow-up visits, phone calls, questionnaires, documents were collected after December 2014. However, most of the research activity was concentrated on preparing the data for analysis (e.g. interview transcription) and analysing the data per se (e.g. coding in NVivo).

The first step has been to process the three types of data separately: observations (including direct observations and films), interviews, and questionnaires. Once a first systematic treatment had been processed, a second round of analysis was applied that was specific to the research questions. During the second round, the different types of data were systematically confronted to yield questions, surprises, and, in iteration with literature, build theory. I will separately develop these two phases in this section, but first I would like to present the general analytical strategy: an inductive study of multi-method case studies using grounded theory techniques.

### **Inductive analysis: building from two cases**

Organisational scholars have suggested the use of comparative studies as a solution for a better account of the role of the context in organisational research (Rousseau and Fried, 2001; Johns, 2006). However, the context here is understood as a social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1971; Smircich, 1983). The comparison here should rather be considered as a powerful analytic perspective to contrast differences between cases. This contrast accounts for what Yin (2014) names theoretical replication. It allows strengthening the validity of theorisation. The two case studies are used to build theory in iteration. The comparison that took place was focused on the difference in the process of the construction of the quality of work relationships. The commonalities and differences were a powerful source for discovering mysteries (Alvesson and Kaerreman, 2007). I also analysed contrasts between other unities, such as between the different entities that I observed at Comms, the different jobs and hierarchical positions, the different hours in the day, the different work situations, and the difference in gender or in years of experience. All these variations allowed for interpretation for how the quality of relationships was shaped and how people made sense of the good way to behave with each other. While I was researching a mundane phenomenon, I tried to see the world as 'anthropologically strange' (Silverman, 2007), and having two case studies was a powerful way to reach this objective. While employees at Serv were able to sustain supportive relationships, at Comms employees sustained convivial but not supportive relationships. Moreover, at Serv, most individuals were able to raise the ethical issue of conflicting responsibilities between the work and the worker, while at Comms no such moral tension was raised. The analysis consisted in following threads that explained these differences in the two settings. The analysis aimed at unveiling the process that led to these different outcomes.

Importantly, the analysis did not consist of point by point comparison of the same elements at Comms and at Serv. However, the analyses conducted in both settings informed each other and thus are not independent but build on each other. What appeared important in one setting could be unimportant in the other, but the attention drawn on a theme in one setting led to show the unimportance in the other setting. For instance, the role of the concealment of

the private life became apparent through the contrast between the two cases. At Comms, people knew little about each other's lives and it was deemed inappropriate to share intimacy, whereas at Serv, people knew about each other's lives and personal issues, and took this into account in their organising. The difference between the two cases allowed me to notice the role of the personal life at work and to look more closely at the role it could play in shaping the quality of relationships at work.

### **First round of analysis: systematic treatment by type of data**

#### *Preparing material from observations*

Field notes were taken extensively during observation and recorded in a notebook. Most of the time, I could take immediate notes because I was in situations where it looked natural, like during meetings, or sitting at a desk. When I could not take notes in the moment, I tried to note a few keywords and expand them a few minutes later when the situation allowed it. I typed my notes in the evening or at the end of a few days visit. When I typed my handwritten notes word by word, I also expanded these notes with further reflections or analyses. I wrote these notes in English, except when there were direct citations from what people had said, in which case I kept the original language so as not to lose the meaning in a hasty translation. I only translated these citations whenever I needed them for showing data in the findings section. These notes reached 72 single-spaced pages for Serv and 98 pages for Comms. An example of these typed field notes is included in Appendix E. I created a NVivo project for all elements relative to observations. They included these field notes, all documents collected, and video and audio recordings.

Intensive note-taking has been applied to the video and audio recordings. I typed notes directly in NVivo so that notes refer to specific moments in each recording. For audio recording, the notes were transcribed whenever it was possible (when several people talked at the same time it was not always possible to hear properly), and included comments about conversations, atmosphere, or any other aspects. Notes from video recordings were similar to notes taken during direct observation in terms of content and attention, but they were much more detailed as the recording allowed for some back and forth, transcribing entire chunks of conversations, and commenting

on micro-interactions such as postures, gestures, or emotions. When extracted from NVivo in forms of tables, these notes amount to 50 pages for Serv and 42 pages for Comms. An example of these detailed notes is available in Appendix F.

The documents collected have also been included in the NVivo project. They comprise emails, PowerPoint presentations, internal memos, work documents on projects, project reports, books, pictures that I took from the offices, pages from websites, statistics on the activity, internship reports. I took notes on documents in forms of annotations or memos that could be then coded in the same way as other notes. When documents were not in a digital form (books, reports) I created memos about them and commented in the same way.

#### *Preparing interviews material*

First, I laboriously transcribed all interviews, except for one whose recording was not good enough to be transcribed entirely. It took place in a restaurant, while all others took place in the offices, which greatly impacted the topics and tones in the interview. As a result, I decided not to include it, leaving 45 interviews in total. Transcribing the interviews by myself took an amount of time that I preferred not to calculate, but it significantly helped the subsequent analysis. I knew the content of each interview well, not only the textual content, but also the tone, the emotions, the atmosphere. The transcriptions yielded more than 800 pages. All interviews were in French, and were coded directly from French. I only translated the extracts that I wanted to show in the findings section. However, I have entirely translated one of the interviews in order to include it in Appendix G. While I was transcribing, I wrote memos for each interview synthesizing who was the interviewee, when and where the interview took place, and comments on the general ideas that were developed as well as on the surprises and the parts that were particularly insightful. Writing memos was one of the key concepts from grounded theory methods (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Holton, 2007; Birks, et al., 2013).

#### *Systematic coding*

Coding was processed separately in each NVivo project, one for Observations, and one for Interviews. However, the procedure and the

experience was fairly similar for both files. I started with coding the interviews. Coding means allocating labels to chunks of data, chunks being usually a few sentences. I systematically coded all interviews in an iterating process. Codes were created on the first interview, then applied to subsequent interviews, which led to re-designing the code slightly. For instance, 'work liking' was created to designate content when people expressed that they liked their job, but it evolved to 'work liking-satisfaction' to encompass any kind of satisfaction with the job that could include pleasure to work, money or social relations. The iteration also refers to codes that were created on subsequent interviews and for which I came back to the previous interviews to look for content for this code that did not initially occur to me. After coding 9 interviews from Serv, I started coding interviews from Comms. This triggered new codes and new iterations. After coding 9 interviews at Serv and 15 at Comms, the coding system started to stabilise. I was rarely changing the codes but only applying them to the new material.

The coding process was similar to the Observations file. Coding was slightly easier because the material was more focused, being the result of my own writing. The places, people, and events that drew my attention were already a pre-selection for analysis. Overviews of the codes for the Interview file and for the Observations file are provided in Appendix H, along with the definition of the codes and reflective notes (memos) accompanying each code. The notes comprised description of the codes so as to make sure I would code consistently all the material, as well as questioning for making the codes evolve. Evolution of the codes was a continuous process that only stopped when it seemed that the coding system was sufficiently stable regarding the research questions. More details are provided in the way the coding system evolved in the following section on the second round of analysis.

I also took notes in the form of memos. I wrote memos on each code so as to describe what they encompass, the possible overlap that I see with other codes, the pre-analysis that I notice. I also wrote long memos about the procedure, the methodological questions I had while coding, and the codes I changed and so on. These procedural memos allowed me to reflect on my practice while doing it and to keep track of it for methodological reporting. Finally, I took notes on higher levels of analysis such as the Sensemaking

process, the Personal-Professional boundary, or the role of Hierarchy. These were seeds of analytical ideas for the second round of analysis.

### *Reflections on the coding process*

One of the difficulties with coding was to find the right level of analysis. According to grounded theory methods, the first level of coding is not supposed to use any theoretical constructs. However, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between theoretical constructs and plain language. For example, I used the code 'boundary work-life' quite early in the coding process. I wondered whether it was too theoretical as it refers to a body of research (e.g. Clark, 2000; Poppleton, *et al.*, 2008; Ollier-Malaterre, *et al.*, 2013; Piszczek and Berg, 2014). However, I chose this expression because it came from my own experience as an employee. I believe that I always consciously considered the right strategy for managing my work life and my personal life concurrently. Hence, this code occurred naturally to me, and I did not see how to split it further to reach a lower level of analysis.

Another difficulty of coding pertains to trade-offs between the number of codes and their consistency. For each code to be internally consistent, to cover a fairly contained range of meanings, required the number of codes to multiply. However, in my experience, dealing with more than 80 or 90 codes was counterproductive as I forgot about some of them and missed occurrences. Hence, I preferred dealing with a manageable number of codes. As a result, I merged codes that were relatively rare. This happened for instance in the interviews file with the codes 'Attention' and 'Availability'. It appeared that giving attention to co-workers or subordinates or making oneself available for co-workers or subordinates were very close in meaning in most context. As a result, both codes overlapped most of the time (i.e. covered the same material), so I decided to merge them in the same code 'Attention-availability'.

### *Situating the role of coding in the analytical process*

The coding process was considered an inherent part of the analysis. I do not claim that another researcher would have created the same system of codes, nor that another researcher would have applied the coding system in the same way on the same data. I worked intensively on the coding so as to make it as consistent as possible (within each type of data). However, as I

worked out the data inductively, the relevance of the coding system could only be appraised when trying to answer the research questions. At that point, it appeared that the coding system had two values. First, the process allowed discovering new themes. For instance, while I did not anticipate to look for elements in people's personal lives, it appeared quickly that looking at relationships led to code a lot of material under codes such as 'boundary work-life', 'personal life' or 'personal issues'. The significance of this theme led to trying to unveil the mechanism between these and the different types of relationships that I was observing.

The second value of the coding system was an efficient classification system. When I was looking for elements on emotions, for instance, several codes could fit in such as 'having fun', 'trust', 'sharing (personal)', or 'liking people'. I opened all material related to these codes and went through the data to find out what was happening there. Hence, the coding system itself did not provide any direct answer to my research questions but provided a way to transform my interpretation of what was going on and a way to look back selectively to the relevant material.

#### *Processing data from the questionnaires*

I have systematically processed and analysed all the data from the questionnaires, but I will only describe the analysis of the measures that are presented in the findings, i.e. the social representation of 'Work' and the caring climate.

Bringing to light the social representation of 'Work'. All the items that have been cited for each organisation were listed in an Excel table, including their citation rank (whether they were cited by the respondents in first, second, etc. until seventh). Some items were then aggregated under the same term, but only when this was the same word with different spellings. For instance, the item 'équipe' ('team') could be spelt 'equipe' or 'Equipe'. From this cleaned list of items, a pivot table allowed ordering the items by rank of frequency (number of citations / number of participants). A rule of thumb used in research using verbal association task is to consider the items with a frequency of 10% or higher as constituents of the social representation (Salès-Wuillemin, 2005). From this selection, combined indicators of frequency and rank were

applied. This analysis defines the representation in terms of prototypicality (Salès-Wuillemin, 2005).

Four zones are thus obtained as follows: the core zone (high frequency and low rank), contrast zone (low frequency and low rank), first periphery zone (high frequency and high rank), and second periphery zone (low frequency and high rank). The threshold chosen between high and low may be different according to the number of participants. The thresholds of 15% frequency and 3 of citation rank have been chosen (high frequency for items cited more than by 15% of the participants, and low rank for items cited 3<sup>rd</sup> on average or before).

Usually, it is possible to compare groups (here Comms and Serv) through Chi square statistical tests for numbers of citation and t- student tests for average ranks of citation, but here the number of respondents for Serv (N=11) did not allow conducting any statistical test. Hence the social representations for each group were only qualitatively analysed as part of each case study.

Calculating the score of caring climate. The caring climate score was calculated by aggregating the answers to the question relative to Benevolence for the Individual level ('Our major concern is always what is best for the other person', 'In this company, people look out for each other's good') and for the Local level ('What is best for everyone in the company is the major consideration here', 'The most important concern is the good of all the people in the company as a whole') (Victor and Cullen, 1988).

No inference test could be conducted to compare results between Serv and Comms as the number of respondents at Serv (N=11) was too low. However, to have insight into the value of each score, I reviewed the literature to find research that applied this measure of caring climate. Results from previous research show higher score of caring climate. They are discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

## **Second round of analysis: digging deeper to answer research questions**

The attitude adopted in the data analysis was 'to be open to contrary evidence' (Yin, 2014, p.76). This openness was particularly enhanced by the

confrontation of the findings emerging from the different types of data. From the process of coding the data, and analysing the questionnaires, some mysteries (Alvesson and Kaerreman, 2007) emerged. They were only hunches at this point. For instance, I was surprised to notice how individuals at Comms justified the need to care for each other through work objectives. I was also intrigued by the contrast between the drive for productivity and efficiency and the cheerfulness of interactions. At Serv, I was struck by the harshness of the children's situations that people were dealing with. I could feel that there was a quality in the relationships at Serv that I did not feel at Comms, but I could not make sense of it immediately. Each of these surprises and questions were threads that I followed to try to explain how the quality of work relationships was constructed (first research question) and how the ethical issue of care was constructed (second research question). An important source for triggering these surprises was the data triangulation.

#### *Triangulating data from different sources*

I have explained how having different types of data (direct observations, interviews, videos and questionnaires) allowed for covering different dimensions (cognitive, temporal and social) of the construction of the quality of work relationships. Hence, separate analysis was conducted on the different types of data. I especially compared the empirical stories of data from the researcher's viewpoint (observations data, including field notes, notes on videos and documents) and the participants' viewpoint (interviews). I looked at the empirical story that each type of data was telling. Then, I compared the stories so as to triangulate the findings. Some parts of the empirical stories were completely in line with each other and other parts seemed to differ. For instance, the themes of performing, being productive at work, emerged in both stories as an anchor point for the construction of quality of work relationships. There were codes that addressed directly this topic in observation data (e.g. 'busy-productive', 'difficult-struggling', 'fluidity-easiness') and interview data (e.g. 'performing-producing', 'responsibility', 'work quality') and they were all used as causal elements to explain the quality of relationships. On the contrary, some elements only emerged vividly in one of the type of data. For instance the theme related to the distinction between work and life appeared

as central in interview data ('boundary work-life', 'distinction pro-perso', 'personal life', 'personal issues at work', 'work at home') but more marginal in observation data ('personal life'). This discrepancy allowed to discover that the personal life was actually mostly concealed (hence was not much prevalent in observation data) despite it was an important aspect that employees considered when trying to have 'good' relationships at work (hence very prevalent in interview data).

I have explained how triangulation was one source for triggering questions. From there, I started following threads and see whether they led to interesting findings (Davis, 1971). These threads were informed by existing literature and the work consisted in looking whether the data allowed for discovering a mysteries (Alvesson and Kaerremann, 2007). Of course, some of these threads ended up in dead ends but I am going to illustrate the process with a successful thread: What is the role of the boundary between work and life in the quality of work relationships?

*Role of the work-life boundary: following a thread, working the codes*

The codes 'personal life' and 'boundary work-life' emerged early in the coding process of interviews. At the beginning, 'boundary work-life' accounted for any kind of statement on the difference between personal life and professional life and how employees manage it. Then I realised that this theme was central but too broad and needed to be subdivided, hence other codes were created. Especially the code 'distinction pro-perso' accounted for the mere distinguishing that people make explicitly or implicitly in their discourse and that allows them to explain their views of the quality of work relationships. Also the code 'personal issues at work' was created for when interviewees talk about how personal issues affect work. So elements coded under 'boundary work-life' were reviewed to make sure that they all belonged to the named category and not to one of the newly created, before progressing toward new material. After this work had been done, I used the codes to answer specific questions that emerged during the analysis, such as, in this case, 'What is the role of the boundary between work and life in the quality of work relationships?'.

I read and contrasted the material that had been coded under the labels ‘personal life’, ‘boundary work-life’, ‘distinction pro-perso’, ‘personal issues at work’, ‘work at home’. These readings led me to other readings. For example, participants evoke ‘personal issues at work’ to regret that they impede the production of the service (either to clients or to users of the social services), hence the question of personal issues at work was linked to elements relative to productivity (‘performing-producing’, ‘work quality’). Moreover, elements relative to ‘personal life’ and ‘distinction pro-perso’ overlapped with explanation of the ‘good’ way to relate to each other at work, such as bonding, sharing (or not) one’s personal life, caring for the person, being human. Thus, elements relative to the work-life boundary came as an important underpinning of the depth of the relationships. Interviewees were defining the ‘good’ way to relate to each other at work through how much people should share about their personal life at work, and how much of their personal constraints are taken into account in their work life.

At this moment, a review of the literature highlighted that research on the work-life boundary were focusing on how individuals managed their different roles (Clark, 2000; Poppleton, *et al.*, 2008; Uhlmann, *et al.*, 2013). However, this did not explain a difference in the quality of relationships. On the contrary, the framework provided by the feminist ethics of care (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993; Noddings, 2003; Tronto, 2010) allowed seeing the quality of relationships under another light. This literature led to the idea that the concern for the person as an end is different to the concern for the person as a means to achieve organisational ends. Going back to the data, it appeared that the existence of the personal life at work led to a kind of relationship that is not concerned solely with the work but is also concerned about the worker. The instrumentality that pervades the workplace emerged as a barrier to the capacity to care for each other at work. This finding is one of the findings that compose chapters 4 and 5 on the quality of relationships at Comms and at Serv. Furthermore, a supplementary analysis on individuals’ discourses has been applied to the data to yield findings presented in Chapter 6.

#### *Analysing the process of construction of the ethical issue*

The point of departure for the analyses presented in Chapter 6 was the first round of coding that had been done on the interviews. This allowed for

selecting the relevant material. For instance, I checked the idea that people used the rationale of the workload as a constraint in material coded under 'productivity'. I also inquired the material under 'emotions' to look for how affects and emotions influence the reasoning. From this material, a second level of analysis was applied. I looked in depth in the discursive production of each person:

- What was his or her idea of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work?
- What were the main anchor points for this idea? What came spontaneously and what additions or contradictions were added in a second time?
- How consistent or changing was the discourse about relationships at work all over the interview?
- What are the underlying assumptions of the discourse? What are the post-hoc justifications to cover for these underlying assumptions?

About the latter point, it is important to emphasise that people cannot tell what does not reach the level of consciousness. This difficulty has been covered in two ways. First, it is possible to confront people's discourse with observations of actual behaviours. For example, during Natacha's interview when I ask about why they do not go around offices to greet everybody individually ('la bise') as it is the case in many (French) workplaces she answers it is too much time lost. However, time efficiency cannot hold as a rational reason because not each day and each person is as busy. If time were a consistent constraint then some people, some day, would take the time to greet the people of their team in the morning individually. Hence, not greeting people in the morning is interpreted as a shared practice, as part of the organisational norms that are not put into question and the origins of this practice have to be interpreted more broadly in relation with other organisational practices and values (see chapters 4 and 5 for a complete analysis). However, it is interesting for the current research question that Natacha justifies this practice through a concern for time efficiency. This shows that work is the main objectives in the mental model of work relationships.

The second way to uncover unconscious or implicit elements that come into play in the construction of the ethical issue is to spot for inconsistencies in the discourse and for post-hoc rationalising (Haidt, 2001; Cushman, *et al.*, 2006). Interviews tell a story of rationalisation. Through interviews, it is possible to unveil how people constrain what they think –and feel- into what they are supposed to think – and feel- according to their pre-existing mental model.

A critical focus of the analysis is to distinguish between the cues that people select in their environment to construct their mental model of the issue and the elements that they activate from existing representation so as to sustain their mental model. The cues are evoked in particular to rationalise their behaviours in the face of constraints: ‘since I do not do this, there must be a reason’. Below is a quote from Alizée's interview that allows illustrating how the difference is made in the analysis between the cues and the constraints that are rationalised a posteriori.

*'Alizée (Serv): Yes, I am capable of listening... But it should not take me the whole day either then. Because actually we have other things to do as well, we don't have time to take a coffee and to take care of the colleague all day long. A little bit, yet but not... And I think that yes I think that everybody should stay at her place, we can be colleagues, we can be attached but... They are not my friends.*

*Me: Mmmm. Yes that's true that the difference sometimes is not so obvious then, when it has been twenty years that one works together.*

*Alizée (Serv)Yeah. It is not obvious, no. It is not obvious but precisely after...There are so many things at work that can interfere that it has to... one has to... one has to take one's distance a little bit because... I have been through this with a colleague, there it is our bond has gone looser until the point where she preferred leaving and so one takes it right in the face also then, one tells oneself where did I... Where did it go out of control, where did it go south, who is to blame and so on, then that's it. For me my colleagues they are here but I won't spend all my weekends with my colleagues or...I ask after them, I... well, we can do one or two things in the year but...Well I know that I keep my*

*distance, there it is, I do not mix everything that's it, I enjoy my colleagues but I don't mix everything'*

Alizée's main point in this exchange is to sever personal from professional life and not to confuse friends with colleagues. Two elements sustain her claim. First, she has '*other things to do*' than to take care of her colleagues. She invokes the work tasks to justify that she cannot take care of her colleagues, and as a result, they should not be friends. A constraint limits her capacity for action, and as a result, she rationalises that they should not be friends, whereas the initial statement was that she could not take care of them. The work tasks were constraining her action –taking care of colleagues- and as she cannot change this constraint, she says that they are not friends. She elaborates consistencies between different rationales that were inconsistent.

The second paragraph recalls an experience that she had with a colleague that became a friend. However, after work-related conflicts they could not stay friends anymore, but they had to stay co-workers, which made the situation painful. From this experience, she consciously establishes the principle of segmenting personal from professional relationships. However, there are other conclusions that she might have drawn from this story. She might have concluded that friends should not let work come into the way of their friendship. Work constraints are taken as unmovable; ergo friendship has to cede precedence.

This example shows how I spotted underlying assumptions in the discourse so as to establish the cognitions on which the issue is constructed. Repeating this analysis with all empirical material allowed for tracing the process of construction of the good way to behave with each other at work. The analysis unveiled that 'how people make sense of the good way to behave with each other at work' is a complicated and multi-faceted process.

### *Writing up the findings*

Writing is thinking. The theories developed in this research on the typology of good relationships at work and on the role of affects in the construction of ethical issues, finally emerged while writing up the findings. While there was initially only one research question on how the quality of relationships was constructed in the organisational context. The iteration

between the data and the literature led to consider two objects of study (or two dependent variables). One finding was on the quality of relationships at work (see Chapters 4 and 5), while the other finding was on the representation of these relationships for the workers (see Chapter 6).

In chapters 4 and 5, I focused on the elements that were most significant for people to construct the organisational context that shaped the quality of relationships at work. These chapters are based on the confrontation and complementarity of observations (direct observations and video recordings), interviews, and questionnaires.

For Chapter 6, the focus was on discourse. Hence interview data were at the core of the analysis. The discourse is understood here as performative (Searle, 1995), hence, the findings came from the confrontation of the discourse with the observed behaviour. Chapter 6 starts with the presentation of supplementary details on the analysis that has been applied to the data for this chapter.

## **V- Methodological limitations: discussing the epistemic significance**

As a 'small N' studies, the question of the choice of the cases is critical for the epistemic significance of the study (Tsoukas, 2009). One of the limitations of the research is that the choice of the cases had consequences on the research findings. Hence, I will discuss the potential impact of the cases on the theories that have been built in this research.

I have stressed the suitability of the organisational settings to address the research questions as they are typical workplaces. However, I could also have chosen extreme cases that would have made the phenomenon at hand more salient. Extreme cases could have been workplaces where relationships could be expected to be very strong, like in the army or very weak like in distance collaboration.

Moreover, I acknowledge that the typicality of Comms and Serv is debatable. For instance, the employees at Comms were particularly skilful at managing relationships, both because of their level of qualification and because of the requirements of their jobs. Moreover, the turnover in the

communication sector is particularly high, creating a temporary time frame for work relationships that possibly facilitates the thrive of instrumentality. While people stay for short periods of time in a workplace they do not have time to develop close bonds. Employees at Serv also had particular skills regarding the management of relationships because their everyday tasks included analysing people's relationships and psychological well-being.

Another particularity of this case research is the national context. The national culture has been pointed out as having a significant effect on co-workers' interaction (Morris, *et al.*, 2008). This research took place in a French context, and as Comms is an international workplace, several interviewees from other countries noticed the specificities in the way people chose to interact with each other in the workplace. In particular, interviewees from Italy, Brazil, Germany and California explained how they had to consciously adapt to different ways of interacting. Other people, from France, but who had had experiences working in China and in England, explicitly explained how they had to adapt over there. The differences they expressed were mostly related to the cheerfulness norm (how cheerful and friendly you have to be) and to the closeness suitability at work (how much you can develop real relationships with the people you meet at work). Without deriving any definitive answers, it can be expected that the influence of the work context on the quality of relationships would hold over different cultures. However, the effect might be more or less significant in different national contexts.

## **Conclusion**

'Competence in research method has traditionally, and narrowly, been expressed in terms of selecting methods consistent with research topic and objectives, while avoiding or resolving those annoying practical fieldwork problems.' (Buchanan and Bryman, 2009, p.14)

As this research adopts a qualitative inductive empirical method, the difficulty with practical fieldwork problems has to be exposed in order for the quality of the research to be convincing. Moreover, rendering a real-life

account of how research is conducted has been emphasised as important for the collective effort to advance research (Van Maanen, *et al.*, 2007). The fabrication in which management and organisation researchers engage to present an ideal of coherent and controlled research process has been criticised (Caicedo, 2011; Anteby, 2013). Hence, I endeavoured to render a real-life account of how research has been conducted here. Doing science is not abstracted from practical and social contingencies (Gergen, 1982). This chapter shall render a more practical account of how the fieldwork was conducted and the consequences both for the quality of the research and for the research ethics.

The method adopted here is holistic in the sense that it endeavours to look at the phenomenon under different perspectives (individual – collective, reasoned – intuitive, episodic – ongoing). However, I discussed these different dimensions explicitly and tried to highlight which methodological tool is responsible for which part of the analysis. This segmenting aims at reaching a level of methodological rigour (Reinecke, *et al.*, 2016), while maintaining the richness of in-depth qualitative studies.

## CHAPTER 4- Relationships at Comms: reconciling good relationships with workplace instrumentality

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to produce an analytical account of my observations at Comms on relationships at work. The objective is to understand how different types of relationships at work are shaped in an organisational context. I explain the quality of work relationships from a holistic approach that situates this social phenomenon in context. The theorised storyline (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007) that is produced here is a way to lead the reader to also see how work relationships are shaped at Comms. I endeavour to describe the work relationships as they appear in different work settings, such as different departments, and also in different work situations. The narration encompasses the different elements in the organisation that, according to my analyses, shaped the quality of work relationships.

Comms is a workplace, therefore, it is expected that the way employees construct their relationships is constituted by how these individuals perceive and enact work. For this reason, I had Comms' employees answer a questionnaire to assess what 'work' means to them. This verbal association task unveils a social representation of 'work' at Comms (Moscovici, 1961, see chapter 3). The results are presented in Table 6 below.

|                           | High average citation rank (> 3)           | Low average citation rank (< 3)                    |
|---------------------------|--|--|
|                           | <i>Associated word (frequency; rank)</i>   | <i>Associated word (frequency; rank)</i>           |
| High frequency (> 15%)    | Stress (21% ; 3.1)                         | Salary-Money (42% ; 2.7)<br>Colleagues (23% ; 2.9) |
| Low frequency (11 to 15%) | Fulfilment (14% ; 3.5)<br>Team (14% ; 3.1) | Hours (11% ; 1.5)                                  |

Table 6: Social Representation of 'Work' ('Travail') at Comms (N=95)

Identifying the social representation of 'Work' at Comms situates the meaning of work for Comms' employees. It provides a basis for thinking about relations as dependent on work-related meaning. From the data, the association of 'work' with earning a living as Salary-Money is cited by more than 40% of the respondents. The other employees are also an important component of 'work' as well, since Colleagues is also in the core of the representation (frequency 23%; rank 2.9) and Team (frequency 14%; rank 3.1) is not at the core but appears in the periphery. Moreover, 'work' is associated with positive feelings of Fulfilment (frequency 14%; rank 3.5) and also negative feelings of Stress (frequency 21%; rank 3.1). And 'work' is also defined by Hours for a minority of people (frequency 11%, rank 1.5).

This exploration of the meaning of work yields two important findings that guide an analysis on quality of relationships at work. Firstly, employees at Comms associate work with earning a salary. In this sense Comms is a 'business as usual' workplace for employees who work there. This is important since monetary gains contrasts with an image of working activities as non-work, playful, and light; I will explain further in this chapter. Secondly, colleagues are recognised as an important component of work itself. The ethnographic analysis that follows fosters further understanding to the meaning of colleagues at Comms and emphasises that work is realised through relationships. Maintaining good relationships is an important function in the accomplishment of work objectives.

In this chapter I first unveil the norms of 'being' at Comms. I borrow Goffman's expression of a presentation of the self (1959) to acknowledge the role of these norms of 'being' as fundamental determinants of the quality of

relationships. There are three characteristics to 'being' at Comms outlined in this chapter: coolness, brightness, and success. These norms of being are shaped in interaction between people and in turn condition the quality of work relationships. Following this, I reflect on what people consider good work relationships should be in the second section. I find that good work relationships at Comms have to be positively experienced, driven by work instrumentality and allow for a specific degree of closeness. Finally, I articulate how positive work relationships, instrumentality and degree of closeness are entangled and condition each other.

## **I- Presentation of the self: Coolness, Brightness, Success**

Comms is a communication agency and my first impression of how Comms employees behave and present themselves fits with the glamorous, high-maintenance and cool that is usually expected in these kinds of creative places (e.g. Malefyt and Moeran, 2003; Nixon, 2003). This first impression is captured in the Vignette 3 below.

### **Vignette 3**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Coming to light'

From the gloomy light of the Paris underground I come up to the surface of the Parisian streets to be dazzled. Midday in July the sunlight is dazzling, but so are the windows of the luxury shops in this very classy neighbourhood...Many people are talking and smoking in front of the entrance. Despite being a secured entrance the door is always open and nobody pays attention to me while I enter the building. The huge atrium in the centre of the building lets light penetrate all the glassed wall offices. The Haussmann building across the street is the only old-fashioned element of the environment since everything else is quite fancy and fashionable. So are the people.

In the office, people are very friendly with each other, often joking around. Everybody says 'tu' -as opposed to the more formal 'vous'- to each other, which is a strong mark of informality, especially when addressing top managers or more senior people. I see a manager sitting on her foot on a chair that looks like it has been picked up in a junk shop and wearing a pair of blue jeans with sneakers and a jumper. Radiant though.

The relaxed nature was not synonymous with freedom of being. Compared to a bureaucratic, old-fashioned organisation (e.g. Jackall, 1988), at Comms it appears that employees have freedom to dress as they please. However, this coolness is a compelling aspect of Comm's organisational in which members are strongly encouraged to be cool in order to fit in. I emphasise in the following section three complementary norms in the

presentation of the self in the workplace: coolness, brightness, and a despicable but necessary commercial success. I will then try to show how these norms shape the way people relate to each other in the workplace.

### **Coolness as a norm: it's not cool not to be cool**

Coolness in the context of a presentation of the self means appearing to succeed without effort and with the impression that life is easy and enjoyable for oneself.

#### *Informality as a mark of belonging*

At Comms, it is appropriate to address people with an informal 'tu' (familiar 'you' in French as opposed to the more formal 'vous' that marks respect for a stranger, or for somebody older or of higher status than oneself). Speaking informally is a quality of belonging. Therefore, somebody who speaks formally is an outcast. This is evidenced in newcomers at Comms who, with a middle-class or higher background, are used to formally addressing people. For newcomers, saying 'tu' in the context of work, including to address senior employees, can feel awkward at first. Enzo, a young intern in Public Relations, explains how it was made very clear to him that it was the right way to behave: *'I have been told explicitly here that everybody says 'tu' to everybody, and every time I say 'vous' to somebody, I get told off.'* 'Tu' is also a mark of youth. For this reason, the Managing Director, in her fifties, does not take it well when people from the company address her with 'vous'. Although she is high in the organisational hierarchy, she does not like it when people use 'vous' out of politeness. Also 'tu' is a sign of belonging since 'vous' is a way to address clients (with some exceptions such as when a Comms employee has known a client for some time).

In addition to language, there are other ways in which informality plays a role in evidencing belonging. For example, informality appears in making jokes, informal dress codes, and pranks among teams, such as when some employees put stickers all over the desk of an employee during her holidays. Another example is when a male employee stuck a poster saying 'Hungry?' with a phone number on a glass wall facing the atrium so those in the atrium

could read it. This was humorous and informal, especially since he had other channels of communication that are more discrete and efficient.

#### *A compelling cool dress code*

The dress code also embodied this coolness. According to their position, people may dress more formally. For example, the female Managing Director meets important people outside the company, so she usually wears high-heels paired with fashionable clothes from high-end clothing brands. However, she will wear blue jeans and a t-shirt for 'agency evenings' (parties organised for the whole company that occur once or twice a year). For other people who do not meet clients on a regular basis, the wearing of formal dress, such as trousers instead of jeans and a buttoned shirt rather than a t-shirt, would indicate they are meeting clients. Some people keep a jacket in their office so they are ready for an impromptu meeting with clients. This shows how important it is to abide by the norm that there is no formal business dress code inside the organisation and when interacting with colleagues. While there is no formal code for dressing, there is a normalised dress code in which Comms employees must appear youthful and looking cool. On young people in their 20's, 'looking young' appears natural. But when I meet the former President who is in his 50's and wearing trainers, a vintage sweatshirt with a pair of blue jeans, this youthful appearance is remarkable. He keeps himself fit and fashionable with haircuts that suit his informal wears. While his appearance is unusual, it also demonstrates how the informality of dress is important to be cool.

#### *Pressure? What pressure?*

Coolness is not only in the way people look but it also has to infuse their attitude. People do not only need to look cool in their appearance, they also need to be cool in their attitude. Vignette 4 below underlines both coolness as attitude and the maintenance of coolness as an accompanied endeavour.

#### **Vignette 4**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Last minute preparation in the boss's office'

Natacha and Brigitte seem very at ease. But they are the bosses indeed and very experienced as opposed to Paul who arrived 4 months ago and Romain 10 days ago. Still the level of relaxedness considering that they are preparing the meeting for the

following hour and that the big boss is here, in her office, is surprising to me. This has certainly to do with the relative erasure of the hierarchical barriers and also with the pressure as a normal way of functioning. Indeed I remark that people don't look intimidated by Brigitte. They say 'tu' to her (as to everybody in the company, it is a much respected informal rule) and they don't hesitate to interrupt her to contribute to the conversation. About the pressure I have been told that they always have pressure, so in the end they wouldn't have any. For this meeting at least it was only about reviewing a finished copy of the presentation, so maybe not so stressful. Moreover I am wondering to what extent the ambience is falsely relaxed. Brigitte, in particular, is obviously a master in control of herself. I can't imagine seeing her losing her nerves. I am also wondering to what extent my presence is influential. I have often the impression that Brigitte particularly takes care of her behaviour while I'm here. But later Natacha told me that it is not about me, she is always this way, in control of herself.

This vignette shows that the coolness is actively maintained. Sometimes a workplace situation comprises many elements of strain, such as working while the 'big boss' is present. However, a 'good' worker will stay cool regardless. For instance, I observed a manager waiting for her team to start a meeting. Members of her team were late or ignoring the meeting call. She told me she was irritated with her team, however, she remained informal and jokingly asked them if they were ready. This manager was renowned for her coolness and brightness. In contrast, I also observed a manager asking somebody in her team to do something immediately, and insisting it happen 'now' in front of other team members. This manager was criticised for this attitude. She was seen as neither cool nor bright.

*I'm ok, I'm ok, I'm ok*

Young newcomers can take some time for becoming cool as it can be stressful to start a new job. However, they are expected to learn quickly. Romain, intern with two weeks experience, had to locate an available room for a meeting happening in the next hour. Scheduling a meeting location is not an exciting issue. However, Romain was stressed, sweating and behaving frenetically. Some people reacted and came to help him with an obvious 'it is easy for me' attitude, but only after he struggled for some time. They showed him the good way to be. Another intern, Eliot, already recognised as brilliant, had suffered a great deal on a specific short-term project that was challenging for him. Over the course of a few days, Eliot had to ask for information from many busy people in order to produce a presentation that the Managing

Director would make to a significant client. His efforts did not work as expected. For example, the flow of communication was messy, since employees on the project did not communicate with each other, and Eliot was involved only at the end of the process. But when the intern's manager, who was knowledgeable of the situation, opened a discussion one evening with him about this experience, she casually undermined Eliot's suffering. She brightly turned the problem into a positive in stating: '*there is an opportunity for reflection*'. The manager empathetically stated that this is how she learned as an intern, and how Eliot should learn. So both the manager and intern agreed on a positivity of the situation: he was learning and the organisation was learning as well.

The above example sets a link between coolness and brightness. People ought to be cool, but they can be cool because they are bright.

### **Brightness: 'Blockheads had better go on their way'**

This quote from an HR person highlights an important criterion for fitting in: brightness. Brightness means the visibility of chic and smartness on the job and during non-work-related activities that are visible in the workplace.

### *Continuous evaluation*

At Comms, employees are evaluated continuously, yet the formal and legally required annual professional assessments are neither important nor systematically conducted. Many people told me they do not do it, or they recall doing it several years ago. However, the Managing Director and the Human Resources Director assured me the assessments do take place every year. Whether they take place or not, the fact that people do not recall doing them evidences their insignificance. This carelessness does not mean that the assessment does not matter. Rather, there is no regard for administrative requirements that are too formal to be 'cool'.

Employees are assessed informally all the time. I observed many examples of this instantaneous and continuous evaluation that is positive or negative. For instance, a comment made about the choice of a creative director to join a project team: '*he is not digital enough*'. Or a comment about a project

leader: *'Pierre is good, he is super service oriented'*. Or a comment made about a junior that has potential but needs improvement: *'but he has to be able to find the right words, never common'*. There are also instances of evaluations in presence. At the end of meetings where ideas or productions have been presented, almost systematically the main creator asks: *'but did you find it good?' or 'what do you think about it?'*. In a face-to-face evaluations though, the positive aspects are overplayed. There is a 'gentleman' culture, as Comms' people call it themselves, that requires managing susceptibilities. So it is important to be positive, even though soft criticism is an integral part of the job. If critics have to be harder, then follow-up conversations will take place with a smaller audience in somebody's office after the meeting. Interestingly, I was not authorised to attend such meetings where somebody was told off. Instead, I was told about it afterwards in the confidence of a one-to-one conversation. Thus, when the quality of work requires being less gentleman they do not want much of an audience to witness it since it is not cool to be severe and critical.

### *Shining self*

Overall brightness is considered a dispositional attribute than a situational one: some people are impressively bright. For instance, Bjorn in advertising explains brightness is the reason why he has pressure when presenting work to senior managers:

*'You see when I am going to present something to Brigitte [Managing Director] I put pressure on myself because...she is the boss and because... she is an eminently brilliant woman, well you see...you respect all of that also because you know that often your bosses are brilliant people.'* (Bjorn)

Levels of brightness drives a person's social status in Comms. Of course, the hierarchy in the organisation can trigger an impression of brightness. However, if somebody high in the organisation is not deemed bright, he or she will not receive respect or people will avoid working with this person.

Brightness has to be displayed in a cool way as well. It is not enough to be good, it also has to show. *'Because we're beautiful'* is a hand-written

statement displayed on a poster in a corridor. This is a slogan of one of Comms' clients selected from the plethora of client's slogans to be displayed. This one embodies the enhancement of the self. Beauty is understood as an artistic aesthetic rather than social norm's of physical attractiveness. The famous, successful, admired people at Comms are beautiful in a social sense: cool, bright, on fashion, different but in the right way. Physical appearance does count, but it is not as important as being original. One example that evidences this is the Comms' website where portraits of employees are publicly viewed. Of course people are beautiful at Comms because they are youthful and healthy, and also because the photographer is talented in structuring an image. However, the portrait's subjects also have unusual poses, such as squatting, transformed into a persona, like a person who wears a camouflage military outfit in their portrait, or another portrait in an employee poses as a homeless person with a sweaty vest top and greasy hair with a pile of junk in the background. The portraits are powerful images that raise emotion. When looking at them, I wonder who these people are. I understand they are certainly not common people.

These portraits are praised because they are collective. They represent the contribution of individuals to the organisation's image. If somebody enhances herself for her own sake, it is perceived as narcissism. An employee leaving the company after ten years in the advertising department organised a get-together to celebrate her leaving. To invite her colleagues, she sent a funny and original email (this is common and many include funny videos from the internet) and shoots a thirty seconds film of herself as the cool star. The invitation message was cool as well: *'let's intoxicate ourselves a last time'*. People commented on it and some of them told me they found it to be too much. Shooting of film for a leaving party cannot be justified as a contribution to the organisation and as a result, was perceived a self-interested.

At Comms being somebody is important. For instance, I was told about who has a successful blog, who is doing politics and knows important people, who has written a book, who has left the company to start a music band and came back afterwards, who speaks fluently Chinese or Russian, and who was working in an art gallery before. Or in a more simply way, people at Comms indicated to who is brilliant, successful, and so on.

There are some jobs though where employees can be not bright or famous. This is the case for some team assistants. Also in Public Relations there are some jobs that do not require a high creativity since they are routinized. So people not considered brilliant can acceptably do the job. This type of person is not so well-known in the company, and should not expect a promotion. However, such non-brilliant assessment is not acceptable in Advertising or Consulting. For instance, a creative person that was not considered creative enough would not last for long; I was told '*he will disappear*'. Also in Consulting, the 'not-so-good' faced ejection even though there was no formal evidence of them not doing their task properly. Such employees were deemed without potential and conducting their everyday tasks was not enough. The manager was constantly appraising whether the newcomers in her team should stay or whether there might be brighter people to fill the job.

Overall Comms employees have to be bright in a cool way. However, commercial success counts also as a direct evidence of success.

## **Success**

Another significant characteristic in the way people behave at Comms is success. Success means actual achievements beneficial to the person and to the organisation, including winning contracts with clients, being awarded creative prizes, and making money for the company. To be successful, people have to be bright, as discussed previously, and they also have to be productive. Efficiency is a criterion for fostering enthusiasm. For instance, a manager exclaims at the end of a meeting: '*we are hyper efficient, I love that!*'. This efficiency is necessary as many cues from the environment show that this is a condition for staying in the company.

### *To be successful or not to be*

In particular the turnover at Comms was high. More than 30% of the people interviewed were not in the company one year and a half later. The Human Resources Director confirmed this was standard. Employees are let go when they are not deemed skilled enough, whether by judgment from a manager or client. The General Manager explained to me that sometimes when

a client does not want to work with a particular person they *'have choices to make'*. When the agency loses a significant client, then often the people who were working on the account leave since their job disappears. Sometimes managers try to move the persons deemed worthy to other positions inside the company. However managers take often the opportunity to keep shaping their workforce in accordance with new skills as markets evolve.

#### *Tasteless bottom line*

A surprising contrast at Comms is success is openly displayed and valorised, but the bottom line is not so much emphasised. *'Money crazy bastards'* said Alistair, a creative person, who was mocking clients for being so obsessed with making money. At Comms, people do not often talk about money. Instead they talk about clients. Client's satisfaction is in each conversation and underlying each move. Since the client has to be satisfied so that he or she will pay for the project and potentially a next one, so this is profitable for Comms. A few employees provided figures, like the pressure to make a 10% profit margin. But overall profitability is not discussed. This is surprising to me since overall profitability underlies most of management's strategic decisions. The Managing Director explained this shortage of figures by the arbitrariness of the group that owns Comms. This meant that the economic and financial performance of one department versus another one would be more attributable to accounting decisions than to real performance. However, this arbitrariness of accounting practices reigns in most large organisations and those organisations still consider these performance indicators as a way to increase employees' performance (e.g. Gruman and Saks, 2011). I interpret this arbitrariness outlined by the Managing Director in contrast with the constant evaluation that I have described in the preceding paragraph. The financial indicators do not capture the brilliantness, the efficiency, the creativity, the originality, and the coolness that are praised at Comms. People, including top management, are conscious that contextual factors can interfere between these individual qualities and the bottom line of a project or a department. Moreover, another important criterion for success, mostly feared for its unpredictability, is the client's satisfaction.

#### *The clients' power over success*

The client is at the centre of projects and conversations, and is the main formal source of evaluation. People like to mock the client in order to destress, undermine the client's power, and distinguish themselves positively in contrast to clients. For example, Bjorn in Advertising explains how the client can be arbitrary and how appreciation of the work they deliver can rest on unreliable evaluation:

*'It is rather a bad joke but sometimes you have feedbacks that you don't know where they come from. The torture test in the corridors. You see sometimes you present something they love it and all, they call you back five days later and they tell you "well, actually we showed it in the corridors...pfff, it is not so good..." [laughing]. Jojo from accounting said it was not good hence we finish up the stuff, well...'*  
(Bjorn)

There is 'us' (Comms) and 'them' (clients). The underlying group positioning is that 'we' work harder, 'we' work better, but 'they' have the final word. Clients' presentations give rhythm and organisation to days, weeks and months. For example, there is a presentation's meeting for tomorrow, there is a call for proposal ending on Monday or the client is not happy so we need to submit a second draft by the end of the week. Clients also structure the organisation since department teams and individuals are divided by client. People acknowledge the importance and pressure that come with clients. However, in order to remain cool, such stresses about clients are downplayed, as Jennifer's (Public Relations) interview extract outlines:

*'Anyway for me it is really what I want to focus on. Without stress there again but telling myself that my clients, well, I have to treat them and to give them results for... so that they stay with us then.'*  
(Jennifer)

Another mechanism that allows downplaying the pressure from the client is to mock them. I have witnessed many jokes about a specific client that refer to the way he talks, his skills deficiency, his unfairness towards them, etc. For instance, Natacha hangs up from a conference call with a client and imitates the aristocratic tone to make her teammates laugh. Or while listening to the waiting music of a call to be answered by a client: *'it costs them five*

*hundred thousand a year this music'*. Or Pierre mocking the client who keeps talking about '*numeric*' while he should say '*digital*'.

Since 'the advertising industry is characterized by work that is hard to specify and a product that is difficult to evaluate' (Alvesson, 1994, p.542), the assessment of a project comes down to the assessment of the Comms employees working on the project. The company praises the brilliantness and coolness that the clients also appreciate. I have witnessed how relaxed clients could be when enjoying a day of workshop in Comms' building for instance. Bjorn explained to me that it is actually like playground time for them. Consequently Comms' people were trying hard to be colourful, relaxed, and sharp in their job at the same time.

Coolness, brightness, and pressure of commercial success is important in relationship skills and managing relationships with clients. Moreover the relational endeavour was not reserved to clients. The requirements for coolness, brightness and success deeply shape how employees interact with each other at work. I elaborate further on this in the next section focusing on how these norms in the organisational culture shape relationships in the workplace.

## **II- Reconciling good relationships with workplace instrumentality: limiting closeness**

The norms of coolness, brightness and success at Comms emerge in the interaction. These qualities underlie how individuals at Comms construct what ought to be good relationships at work. While Comms is a competitive organisation with cutthroat assessment, in my observations I found people being relaxed, cheerful, positive, smiling, and connecting easily with each other at every level of the hierarchy. However, it quickly appeared that employees could effortlessly switch to a highly instrumental model where the concern for work performance was overwhelming and trumped care for people's wellbeing. This limited caring was in particular visible in the measure of caring climate that was administered. Results show a mean of 2.60 (N=83;  $\sigma=.76$ ) on a five points scale, which is quite low. For instance, the same questions have yielded a mean of 3.13 (N=476;  $\sigma=1.09$ ) in a large insurance

company in Mainland China (Fu and Deshpande, 2014) and 3.33 (N=408;  $\sigma=.29$ ) in 24 high-technology firms in Taiwan (Wang and Hsieh, 2013).

In this section, I explain the links between the norms at Comms and the quality of relationships that it is constructed and enacted by people in the workplace. Both as a sign of coolness and efficiency, relationships are infused with respect, such as being a gentleman, and positivity, like being cheerful and friendly. However, positivity in relationships is underpinned by instrumentality. Enhancing good relationships is justified by a need to be productive and efficient. Finally, relationships at Comms are limited to a level of closeness that is deemed acceptable.

### **Positive relationships: respectful and enjoyable**

The coolness and brightness as an overall normative attitude at Comms also manifests in relationships. People assume naturally that they need to show respect, education, politeness, consideration, and they enact this assumption in their everyday interactions.

#### *Tact as emphasizing quality of people's work*

For instance, there were very few occurrences of disrespectful interactions, such as being rude, ignoring people, or insulting. And that is particularly noticeable as there were many situations where the ambience was tense because people were working very hard, yet the client remained unsatisfied. Comms' products are creative and intellectual whose quality is subjectively acknowledged and cannot be objectively measured. In difficult situations when people were told that what they presented was not good, such comments were made with tact. For example, at an important internal meeting where creative ideas were being presented a few days before the client's presentation, it was quickly ascertained that the results were disappointing. However, this was never clearly outspoken. Instead the lack of quality was made apparent as every idea presented raised negative appraisals or awkward silences. Nevertheless, employees' skills were never put into question. Also, the difficulty of the task was acknowledged. In particular, the ambiguity of the client's mission order was raised as well as the short delay to realise the task. When the head of the creative department outlined that they '*only had one*

day', the Managing Director tactfully replied '*I am up to see each other this weekend, whenever you want, I stay around Paris*'. But after the meeting the words against what had been presented were much sharper, for instance, the Managing Director regretted that '*it shows our lack of culture*'. During an interview she outlined how tactful you need to be as people give part of themselves in their work:

*'You have to say when something was not good [...] but not saying "you don't understand nothing, you're dumb", since the line is thin between - I find- being thoughtful with people and assessing them instead of assessing their work.'* (Brigitte)

This effort to be respectful of each other's work makes it easier to fit in when new people arrive. At Comms, individuals praise that they have '*simple and fluid relationships*' as Joséphine expresses, even with people above in the hierarchy. It is easy to connect with people in the workplace. A young woman acknowledges this cordiality helped make her integration fairly easy:

*'My interactions with people happened very quickly as early as the first day, I reckon it has not been a difficulty at all'* (Jennifer)

#### *Cheerfulness as emphasizing emotional positivity*

An important element for an ease in relationships is a norm of positivity. Fanny, from Public Relations, explains that '*there are some things that are to be said at work and some things that are not*' as she recognises that the quality of language is the basis for building quality social relationships. As a result, people do not use bad words or complain. Similarly Kero, an assistant from Public Relations, emphasises how they need to stay positive to enhance good relations, even though they may have issues at home: '*even when one has issues at home, they should be left at home then, and when you arrive in the agency it is joyful and cheerful*'. The emotional endeavour in relationships is made very clear. For instance, Jennifer explains that this cordiality means to integrate everybody, even when somebody does not have affinities with another person. As a result, there is an enjoyable team spirit. For example, at a meeting Bjorn stated in a joking tone: '*so we agree that we don't quite agree!*' and people laughed. This jocular expression allows employees to avoid direct, negative appraisal and disagreement. Thus, putting

everybody under the same 'we' despite divergences of views as a way of bonding.

#### *Gentleman as prioritising collective considerations*

I also witnessed a creative meeting where Bruno, a creative person, was presenting ideas from his team. When Bruno turned to their third idea, the head of department let them know that another team had the same idea and that they had deepened it more. So Bruno let go of the idea immediately and went on to the fourth idea. This is significant since in the advertising industry, people sell ideas, and ideas win prizes and reputation. Now, allowing another team to move forward with the idea is altruistic. Bjorn commented this anecdote to emphasise that this situation was unusual compared to other communication agencies. It shows that the benefit for the organisation comes first.

Michel, a senior manager whose entire career is at Comms, described somebody's behaviour negatively as 'not very gentleman'. I asked him to explain to me what 'not very gentleman' means:

*'Well I... it is for example... [...] not very gentleman is...in this case it was very individualistic, I think that... there is a true company culture, team culture then, of team work, everybody works for the agency, you don't work for you personally, whereas many creative people are like that, they work for their own projects, so as to get Lions [prestigious creative awards]. [...] You have the feeling to belong, to work for an Agency. So if you don't have that I don't think it will work here. And then it is the respect for people, I think that we...well we hate people who are either too political, or what I just told you too individual, or too... Well, be only politeness and all with people, it is really important. Divas ...people who don't say 'hi' and so, it would be a problem here. And that is not being a gentleman.'* (Michel)

#### *Humour as enhancing pleasure to work*

The citation above presents the cordiality and team spirit expected at Comms. Another way of assuring positive experience of relationships that I observed a lot at Comms is humour. Humour is almost a norm in relationships as well, since humour eases the atmosphere and fosters individuals' spirit. For

instance, still about the same meeting that did not go so well, while the head of the consulting team was trying to reassure the creative people in terms of the short delays they have on this mission, stating: *'there is no direct relation between the time of the idea and the quality of the idea'*, a creative person answered cheerfully: *'ah well, that is good news!'*, and everybody laughed. This spirit deflected the underlying criticism of delays while also relaxing the tension in the room.

Furthermore, this tactful and witty way of interacting also enhances the pleasure to work. The pleasure to work at Comms struck me right away. People are passionate about their ideas, especially since work is creative. Beyond 'creative people', other jobs such as strategic planning, consulting in communication strategy or in public relations, require a part of creativity to attend to each client or brand, to each project and each way of organizing. Consequently various positions face an eternal re-invention. Even in the public relations, that was the most routinized among these jobs that I could observe, people have to adapt to what's new and trends so as to offer their client the most up-to-date services. The pleasure to work comes from the content of the work, as most people like their job. Also from the positivity in the interactions, as the excerpt below shows:

### **Vignette 5**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Improvised team brainstorming'

|  |
|--|
| <p>A few people from the Consulting team are trying to find an idea for a new client's call for project. Natacha [manager] is a sensegiver here, I can see she enjoys finding ideas: 'Actually it is "all roads lead to Rome" ', then explains what it is about. But later on in the conversation she comes back to this idea and says that it is not exactly that, but rather the idea of a four motion. They are looking for images to help them express their ideas. Around her the others reply lightly, bring in some examples. Then Natacha proposes to take a look at some specific websites to get inspired: 'It is not uninteresting to take a look'. Once again she illustrates the need for openness on the world, being continuously on the lookout. They look happy to work together on a creative topic.</p> |
|--|

Managers need to lead the way in a respectful manner rather than looking down from above and to stimulate creativity through enjoyable interactions. The informality comes with a sort of friendliness as if all employees appear to like each other. People like to work together. But liking people and liking to work together are often indistinguishable. In internal meetings, most of the time people are smiling or laughing and using

expressions such as '*I love it*' or '*this is great*'. I felt this cheerfulness was real and participated to the pleasure to work.

*Breach: When the positivity is not displayed*

Overall, positivity in relationships is a norm at Comms. Hence when it does not happen it is a breach of expectation. When positivity failed it led to awkwardness. For instance, at a company party when somebody was trying to use a computer but could not find the password, a senior manager let out jokingly: '*try "Gilles is a dickhead"!*', Gilles being another senior manager that he obviously did not like. This joke fell flat because it was too much tempered and petty and vulgar rather than witty. Hence it did not make him look likeable in any way.

A lack of spirit and aggressiveness are not tolerated at Comms. For example, a person in the creative team was very successful but was known for his inappropriate behaviour. In an angry email he wrote: '*I am going to be all very upset*'. This childish expression emphasized that he had trouble managing his frustration and was not behaving as a professional grown-up positioned high up in the company. People were laughing at him and telling stories about him 'losing it'. This shows how being quick-tempered was not the right way to behave at Comms. In this case it was tolerated, even though managers were actively trying to fix the problem, because the person was a star in the creative team and a company asset. So brightness and efficiency may allow an employee to get away with some infringement of the norm of positivity in relationships. This tolerance resonates with another aspect of positive relationships at Comms: they need to be productive.

**Instrumentality: Maintaining good relationships so as to be efficient and productive**

I emphasised how coolness at Comms was in symbiosis with brightness and success in work achievements. The importance of shining at one's job also has significant influence on relationships at work, as well as the norm of success that means that relationships have to be productive and efficient.

### *Positive emotions to make others productive*

Hence, a reason for enhancing positive relationships is that not doing so is deemed harmful. Thus, not hurting people is justified by productive purposes. For example, Fanny explains that having a negative attitude and displaying negative emotions spreads. So people should not display aggressiveness against a person behind his or her back. She had this experience, and said it was stressful and negatively impacted her work. Similarly, Joséphine emphasised how the bullying of a boss in a previous job was harmful because it was not productive:

*'But actually so when I had seen it ended up around me at burst of tears, or this type of things, I think this is not the right solution to get a team to work well and... That's it.'* (Joséphine)

### *Good relationships to make oneself productive*

Moreover, nurturing good relationships is justified by the benefit of enhancing one's network in the organisation. In an organisation like Comms, where new projects are launched every month, networking is critical to success. Natacha (Consulting) explains:

*'But as soon as I am gonna have a question, I am going to know right away in the company "tac-tac-tac" [emphasises quickness and efficiency of subsequent tasks being done], that is why it is important to build one's networks in the company because then it will allow us to go quicker, that is cool, and on the other hand when somebody has a need, he is on a new mission etc., and that he knows that I am very good at this topic, then he is going to call me and I take likewise the time that is needed'.*

Also, Rona outlines that to perform one's job, one *'has to be connected'*. He links this capacity to connect to others to an ability to display a positive attitude and availability.

An exchange between a manager and an intern illustrates this instrumentality in relationships: people nurture the relationship because they need something from others. The manager teaches an intern how to obtain from other teams what he needs from them and explains how diplomatic and tactful he needs to be if he wants to get something done: *'you should not hassle*

*them too much, because if you hassle them too much... it's not gonna work out.*'. To which the intern replies: *'it's only that it is kind of frustrating'*, in expressing euphemistically the strain he experiences in this situation. In fact, networking is a crucial activity where people need to be brilliant and efficient. One must assess people and then work on relationships with performing co-workers. As a result, relational skills were often underlined as an important work skill. Since Comms' business is one of ideas, being able to convince the manager or client is key. For Bjorn (advertising) *'half of the job for a creative person is achieved at the moment where he has to go sell his idea to his creative director'*. Also Fanny explains how she has different interaction styles with different people, to please them and also to get more out of the interaction.

Hence, coolness, brightness, and success are norms for the presentation of the self that are explicitly underlined as a way to enhance good relationships with people, and a way to be efficient and productive at work. For instance, easy connections allow information to flow more easily, as cordiality *'is the basis for the information to circulate well in the company'* (Anne, Public Relations). Enzo, a young intern from Public Relations, explains that this easiness of relations, especially with people higher up than him, allows for work to be done more efficiently:

*'Because in the end when we don't dare to ask for a piece of information it blocks the work because we stay for hours looking for information that we won't necessarily find ourselves whereas we could have asked in five seconds to somebody who has been there for longer than us.'*(Enzo)

So taking care of the collective is emphasised as a way to take care of the job. Sarah emphasises how they need to be able to talk to each other, *'to be in dialogue [...] so as to be able to resolve problems together'*. And to do so they need to *'leave open doors to others'*. For her it is *'the good way to behave at work'*. Open offices are deemed beneficial for the quality of relationships as well because connections can happen more fluidly without walls, even though the price to pay is the level of noise that can hurt concentrating. Similarly, some people who used to be in different buildings explained that being all in

the same building enhanced informal interaction, and helped information flowing more easily.

### *Caring for others to make them productive*

As a result, the difference between liking people for who they are and liking what they can bring to work and the organization is unclear. People like others when their creativity and intelligence can contribute to projects' success. In any case, in practice it is not so easy to disentangle instrumental motives in the relationships, that is being nice to somebody to get something in return, from the mutual enjoyment of good relationships. The vignette 6 below illustrates this ambiguity.

### **Vignette 6**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Nice connections, mixed motives'

Natacha knows that on this day a team is going to present their work to the final stage of a call for proposal in Germany, so when she wakes up at 7 am she sends the team an email of encouragement 'you'll be great from A to Z' (with a humorous word on the slogan of the potential customer). When I ask her why she did it she replies: *'it is only natural, it's nice though. Not everybody does it'*. But at 1 pm when the people on the team (in an upper hierarchy relatively to her) call her to report cheerfully on their presentation in the morning, she explains the nice gesture from them as a response to her email from the morning. So I wonder to what extent her showing support was underpinned by instrumental motives.

Being nice with people allows an individual to get more from those they are kind to. They consider that if they can get somebody to like them, then they can get her to do more things for them. That is why employees need to *'create relationships'* (Rona) as a proactive behaviour. Rona explains that people will *'sacrifice a little bit'* to help *'if we have a specific connection with the people'*.

People will need to care for others if they want to yield the best from the relationship. For instance, in a meeting where one of the participants clearly took a step back at some point, the head of the project showed interest in him, asking him his opinion and whether he was happy with the direction they were heading to. When asked after the meeting about this particular endeavour, she explained:

*'Well yes because... as there was a disagreement with him and his boss I wanted to make him re-enter the discussion and because he has good ideas, otherwise cutting ourselves from a...participant, that's too bad'* (Natacha).

The concern Natacha displayed for this person was underpinned by her concern for the quality of the production. The care for people's wellbeing is clearly justified by the purpose of the work:

*'A trust climate has to be fostered so that people feel good, otherwise you don't work well.[...] And because it needs to be efficient' (Natacha)*

Even connecting with people at work at a personal level is justified by work outcomes. Sixtine explains that knowing people more intimately enables you to know how to work well with them. For instance, knowledge of family helps to understand the work hours a person can commit to. For this purpose, empathy is considered a work skill as *'to be empathetic to be able to see others' viewpoints and at the same time being able to listen what they tell you'* (Natacha). Greeting people and asking how they are is considered as displaying professionalism. Connecting with people at a more personal level means showing interest in them and interviewees have highlighted how it enhances motivation. A young woman from advertising, praises her manager for asking about her and her family:

*'Actually if you see that your manager is interested in your life and in you, I think it makes you want to work more for them, [you think] she is great or kind, or she does her job so well then actually it motivates you more to do your job' (Effie)*

Moreover, there are some aspects of personal lives that can be useful for networking purposes. For instance, one person's wife is working at a company that is a potential client. Or this person's cousin knows the head of the communication department in this other company, so he or she could introduce us. Or this person is from Brazil, so she can speak to a Brazilian company in their native tongue.

#### *Breach: When people are of no use*

People who are deemed good and efficient benefit from a comfortable network of pleasant, useful relationships while employees deemed not good enough will be less supported. In consequence, these employees may end up alienated, failing and leaving. For instance, morning greetings are addressed in offices only to persons that an employee works with. This is particularly

noticeable because of open-plan office. One can observe how people segment the office space symbolically between people they work with or have potential to work with in contrast to people that do not work with them and have no potential to. For instance, everybody greets the receptionists warmly on the way in since they are valuable as gate-keepers receiving the clients and controlling room bookings, which is a critical issue at Comms. This quote from a manager illustrates the ambiguity between assessing people's professional worth and enhancing good relationships with them:

*'Being nice with people encompasses... having good relationships. It is not that I don't make effort to be nice, it is not an effort, actually it is really not an effort at all, it is only natural. But on the contrary if there is somebody I don't think is competent, I won't be nice. Well then yes, for sure I...Well I don't mean it but I know that people that I believe to be really hopeless they are going to feel it, that's for sure. And I won't make any effort [laughing] for them not to feel it.'*  
(Natacha)

Hence the effort to have respectful and enjoyable relationships is directly oriented towards work productivity and efficiency. However, there is a positive aspect of work relationships that Comms employees are more ambivalent about: the degree of closeness.

### **Sharing but not too much: The good level of closeness**

Being close and sharing one's personal life is not required at Comms. In some teams I observed, it appeared that people were not close. People were cheerful and nice to each other and made jokes, but would not go further. When there happened to be an occasion to get-together for breakfast, people came politely and enthusiastically to have one drink and a pastry, but they exchanged minimal conversation before returning swiftly to their desk.

#### *People have feelings (even at work)*

However, often, bonds developed between certain individuals at Comms. People appear to like each other most of the time, they like working together, talking to each other. Natacha is genuine when she tells Rona who steps by in her office: *'that makes me happy to see you, it's been a while!'*.

Comms employees are often actively trying to build bonds so as to get along. The rationale for doing it is both to enjoy working, and also to work better together: *'We get along just fine, it starts from it... we enjoy spending time together, we like joking around with each other'* (Bjorn). Similarly Kero emphasises that *'it is more pleasant'* to work with people they like, that they get along with. And if somebody has a concern at work then she can share it with the person she likes, and take her advice. As a result it makes her life easier. Sharing seems to be part of the process, as people need to talk about themselves to increase closeness. Fanny also explains sharing hobbies, music or movies they like help people feel good and *'is also a channel to let some steam off'*. Raphael states that at Comms *'things work a lot according to emotionality, according to personal affinities'* and a team will work well *'because they are people who get very well along beyond the work'*.

#### *People bond... but not too much*

This degree of closeness entails interacting at a more personal level, such as sharing about one's personal life, and this seems to happen more easily in some specific work hours. Sophie is particularly enthusiastic about the habit to have lunch together with members of her team (Public Relations): *'it is nice because actually that is how bonds can be created within the teams'*. And she emphasises that it allows sharing more than work as it is *'a convivial moment when we are not under pressure, well we talk about our lives, we share things'*. Also it happens when people work long hours, as a manager from Consulting explains:

*'We stay quite long, we work like mad until very late then when we work until 10 pm and we have shared something with somebody, a dinner, a thing or another, it creates bonds necessarily, and some stories in common actually'* (Sophie).

However, the sharing that people refer to during interviews only happens at a superficial level. This quote from Sarah, a senior executive who newly arrived in Public Relations, encapsulates the impression that emerges from observations of personal exchanges at Comms:

*'I don't have the impression that people talk so much about their personal lives. They talk...yes theatre, cinema, well the personal social life, not the personal-personal life.'* (Sarah)

For instance, Jennifer from Public Relations is very chatty and starts her day of work easily by sharing some personal details about her life. But it is always about insignificant aspects of her life in a light tone, and funny, if possible. One morning she states: *'I am very irritated because as early as eight o'clock this morning there was already no available seats for the preview showing that I wanted to attend'*. Talking about one's social life and cultural interests is a good way to present oneself as cool and cultivated.

Furthermore, personal life is often exposed for direct use to produce work. Sébastien, the head of the creative department, is evidence of this. During a project for an insurance company, he was taking multiple examples from his private life to support the creative ideas that were being presented. After two short meetings, I knew a lot about his life, such as he had a Porsche Cayenne, an American Express card, and his bank was HSBC. Other examples of this casual sharing of personal anecdotes include people sharing personal consumer experiences. For instance, talking about a potential client that is a furniture retailer, people of the Consulting team share their personal experience with buying furniture from this retailer. However, they only share superficial aspects of their lives:

*'It is not the real life, it is not... your zone of personal intimacy, you don't have to go tell your whole life or become friend with each of your colleagues'* (Bjorn)

#### *The appropriate level of closeness: a professional skill*

How close people need to be to their colleagues or the extent it is suitable to share one's personal life at work, are not easy questions to answer. The extract from field notes below illustrates the blurriness of work/non-work boundary that seems to be a youngster prerogative:

#### **Vignette 7**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Personal laptop at work'

I was quite surprised that it is Julien's personal laptop. I think this is symptomatic of this company's culture: entrepreneurship. But it also blurs somewhat the barrier

between the personal and the professional. Maybe it is something related to Julien who is particularly young.

Julien is in his early twenties and prefers using his Mac since the company would only provide him with a PC. So he comes to work with his own laptop, which is quite unusual and potentially problematic if it crashes, since the IT service would not be entitled to take care of it. And overall young people seem to see each other rather often, especially people from advertising. Effie talks about having dinner with colleagues regularly and Julien about having drinks after work. In contrast, senior employees like Fanny, Natacha, Sixtine and Bjorn, acknowledge they used to go out as well, but not anymore. For instance, Sixtine, from advertising, observes how youth enhances sharing about one's personal life:

*'There is short age difference in the end between people... then actually everything can be said, incidentally on professional and personal topics, you go get drinks at the end of the office day suddenly people start telling their life, it is very funny but you see they all have the same age as you and finally you realise that well... we all have somewhat the same lives, the same jokes and so on then that is very nice.'* (Sixtine)

It seems that employees who are less experienced have more trouble to determine the good level of sharing, although they already see it as a difficult question to answer. Enzo and Eliot are both young interns, the former in Public Relations, the latter in Consulting:

*'That's true that... in everyday life even though it is good to enquire [about people], enquiring too much can become disturbing professionally. But not enquiring at all is a silly thing to do as well, you have still to ask at a minimum, and to create bonds with your colleagues then.'* (Enzo)

*'Therefore starting from this analysis, how to reconcile at best the need for professionalism, for rationality and efficacy, and the humanity... the need for considering the humanity and the emotions?'* (Eliot)

Similarly Effie from advertising, who is in her early twenties, tries to set her mind on the situations that authorise people to share their personal problems at work. She explains that people should not come crying at work '*because your boyfriend dumped you*' and should compose themselves but if it is more important such as '*somebody in your family passed away*' then it should be acknowledged at work and taken into account by co-workers.

However, amongst more experienced workers, the boundary is clear. It is suitable to enhance enjoyable professional relationships that entail sharing superficial aspects of personal life, but it is not suitable to reach a level of closeness that would make the relationship tip the personal sphere. Sixtine explains this distinction to make between personal and professional life:

*'I think there should be some form of distance, of professionalism, that there might be a possible danger as to enter in relationships that are too... too personal because it is going to create lots of emotions in one sense or another depending on the moments, on the situations, etc. Professional interests can't always match personal interests, therefore some form of distance I think is a good regulator and seems to me appropriate in the work setting'. (Sixtine)*

Fanny as well emphasises the difference between enhancing good work relationships and building friendship, the latter being not suitable in the work setting:

*'The good behaviour? It's...It's extremely broad, it's...it's knowing how to stay professional. Then it is telling oneself that...we are not here to build friendships, that...we are here to serve a common goal.' (Fanny)*

Hence people consider that the problem with friendship is that it may divert people from their purpose in the organisation. If co-workers are too close, then they are at risk of seeing personal and professional interests clash. Friendship is one example of this closeness where people are concerned about the other person more so than concern for work. Rona elaborates on this personal/professional conflict while explaining why friendship at work is difficult to handle: '*because it is touchier since you can fall on people who don't understand the difference*' and then it can be difficult relationally for you to handle.

*Breach: friendship happens... but in the closet*

During my months of observation at Comms, I rarely observed close relationships, such as talking about significant elements of one's personal life. The only exception was when I spent some lunch hours with an employee at Comms who is also a personal friend of mine. My friend invited one of her colleagues from a different department who is also a friend of hers. There they both spoke about work, in a transparent manner. They gossiped and talked about personal matters such as childcare issues. Except for these moments accessible to me due to my personal relationships with one of the members of Comms, I never witnessed other personal discussions of this nature. However, personal relationships exist since occasionally several people told me about them during interviews. They were mentioning friendship as the exception to the rule for not sharing personal matters at work. For instance, Jennifer explains that she does not share her personal life at work, except to the employees that have become her friends:

*'There are boundaries to be set I think because I...it happens that I have here ...colleagues who have become friends indeed, there are few but there are some, but outside of this I don't see why I would tell the details of my weekend or my evening to my colleagues and by the way it does not happen like that'.*

During interviews only Fanny gave the name of a person she considers her friend in the company instead of making abstract statements on the unsuitability of friendship in the workplace. Fanny states that Sandra is a friend to justify that Sandra knew for a while about her personal project to start a new career in a completely different domain:

*'Only Sandra knew about it because Sandra is a friend and she knew I was taking the test, but... to the others I disclosed it much later'.*

Since her project entailed leaving the company at some point, it clashed with organisational outcomes. Therefore, even though this project was very significant in Fanny's life, she had no doubt that it should not be disclosed at work. She may have felt safe to disclose it with me because the interview took place two weeks before she would leave the company to start her new career.

The latter point raises the question for the precedence of instrumentality or of limitation to closeness. People argue that they need to have professional distance with people at work in order to put work as their primary aim. In return, the concealment of the personal life enhances work as the primary purpose at Comms. The last section of this chapter disentangles the relationships between positivity, instrumentality and limitation of closeness.

### **III- The entanglement between positive relationships, instrumentality and closeness limitation**

I analysed three features of Comms' workplace relationships: positivity, instrumentality and limited closeness. This chapter ends by discussing how these different features are in relation to each other.

#### **The norm of positivity: an effective detachment**

Positivity was previously discussed as the relational endeavour necessary for working well. Being tactful, polite, respectful, and not losing one's temper, are ways to be a gentleman at Comms. This relationships quality fosters an atmosphere that is conducive for promoting work productivity and effectiveness. As for the relation between positivity and degrees of closeness, it seems that the latter characterises the former. What Comms employees consider good relationships are those that are not-so-close and can also be described as pleasant, respectful, and enjoyable. The limited closeness is a necessary condition for good quality of work relationships.

A certain level of closeness enables one to enjoy relationships. Work is work, but it is nice to enjoy working with people. Luc explains that getting along at work well is '*the minimum*' but that '*at best you would appreciate somebody and like working with him*'. Liking people is not required, but the relational effort to get along is necessary. Therefore, a limited closeness is considered a necessary feature of positive work relationships as opposed to friendship, since the latter risks disturbing the smoothness of work.

### **Instrumentality and closeness limitation: Which one conditions the other?**

I previously emphasised that individuals at Comms consider they should not share too much of their personal life as part of being professional. They position work at the centre of their attention in contrast to the closeness of relationships at work. Since people work better with people that they know and like, they try to like each other to be productive. However, they explain that it is not suitable to be too close, otherwise they might be diverted from their work objectives. The exchanges I observed covered only work-related topics and more personal topics stayed on superficial levels, such as social and cultural life. Hence, it appears that people consciously limit their relational involvement with people at work so as to be productive and efficient in their job. Moreover, the instrumentality that pervades the workplace constrains the possibility to be close.

#### *Instrumentality determines possible ontologies of work relationships*

Since work has to be a priority, implicitly people cannot display their personal life because it would be an infringement to the primacy of work. As a result, personal life is muted and a closeness in relationships limited. Vignette 8 below illustrates this statement.

#### **Vignette 8**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Pregnancy monitoring does not come in the way'

Natacha is a bit worried that she might be late for a personal appointment. She is supposed to see a midwife at 4.45pm for the monitoring of her pregnancy. As the meeting is planned from 2 to 3.30pm it should not be a problem, but still meetings can be longer than planned, it happens very often. To that topic it is not good news that Brigitte won't be here because it means that she won't be able to leave before the end of the meeting (implicitly neither Paul nor Romain are senior enough to be left alone in the meeting). And she knows that she can't possibly rush the end of the meeting.

While I am waiting in her office I see the time passing by and I am worried about her because I know it will be difficult for her not to go to her appointment. And in the end the meeting ends after 5pm so naturally she couldn't go to her pregnancy monitoring appointment. But she doesn't seem angry when they finally come back from the meeting. They debrief about it quickly then with Brigitte who got back in the meantime. Natacha seems happy of the meeting, they explain what works well and what raised more question or resistance. Natacha tells Brigitte that she had to miss her appointment but the latter doesn't react, she looks at me though (I am seated in Natacha's office and they are discussing just out of it so that I can see them through the glass wall and hear them very well because the door is broadly open (as always)).

Later Natacha will tell me that she was annoyed to miss her appointment but she has her second ultrasound a week later so it's OK, she would have rather be reassured that everything was right though.

In this example, Natacha does not 'hide' her pregnancy, but she does not display her pregnancy or draw attention to the constraints her pregnancy has on her work, such as attending medical appointments. She places her job first, and her personal life, including her pregnancy, second. This is how things are. One awkward moment is when Natacha tells Brigitte, her boss, that she missed her medical appointment because of a late meeting. Brigitte is ill-at-ease because she knows it does not look good while I observe the exchange. At Comms there is this veneer of being gentleman, and pressuring pregnant women to work rather than take care of their pregnancy is not very gentleman. I do not believe that this is what happened either. Had Natacha told Brigitte before the meeting about her appointment, Brigitte would certainly have told her to attend it. However, Natacha did not tell her beforehand. Since this was not work-related (but personal) information, it was not disclosed.

Similarly, when people are let go from Comms it is addressed through work-related discussions. How the job loss will impact their professional lives is raised, but not how this will affect their personal lives. For instance, the Managing Director explained to me: '*the world is small and the life is long*'. It is important to keep good relationships with people because it is still possible that they would be encountered again later on, whether as clients, suppliers, or returning employees. The absence of speaking about personal life can be illustrated by Joséphine's departure story. Joséphine was hired by the Consulting team on a nine-month contract. A few months in, the manager was not impressed by her performance and contemplates not renewing her contract although Comms needs the job filled permanently. The manager has two evaluation meetings with Joséphine to discuss this dissatisfaction and how Joséphine's career may evolve. The conclusion is that Joséphine is not the right fit for the job and should look elsewhere for a job with a better fit to her abilities. While Joséphine finishes her last weeks at Comms, the team talks about filling in the job, but nobody raises the issue of what the impending unemployment might mean for Joséphine personally. On the last day of work Joséphine has not found a job yet. In private, I ask her about it and Joséphine tells me she is sad to lose a job she loved, and is anxious to find a new one. But

she never expresses such concerns with her team or her manager. And since everybody, including Joséphine, agrees that she would be better off with a job elsewhere that better matches her profile, her leaving is not sad or painful. The instrumentality that pervades the workplace has made it impossible to connect with Joséphine at a more personal level. Since what matters is performing one's job, so the personal situation of Joséphine is irrelevant and appears non-existent.

The next Chapter adds another case study on a child protection service in order to advance the inquiry on how the quality of work relationships is constructed. Moreover, Chapter 6 presents a broader analysis of the construction of the ethical issue of the 'good' way to relate to people at work, and addresses how people make sense of limited closeness in an instrumental environment of work.

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter aimed to give an account of how relationships at Comms were constructed in the workplace. The elements that have been highlighted in the organisational culture are foundations on which Comms employees construct the quality of work relationships. These elements are norms of coolness, brightness, and (commercial) success. Employees at Comms had to be cool, which meant not being too serious and handling pressure in an effortless calm. Coolness was also related to brightness. People were relentlessly assessed on the extent to which they were brilliant, cultivated, and socially apt, which fostered an ability to succeed without effort. In addition, individuals needed to be successful in their projects by gaining clients' positive appraisal and admiration within Comms.

Relationships at Comms were built on these norms of organisational culture. In particular, good relationships were considered to feature three characteristics: positivity, instrumentality, and limited closeness. First, relationships at work had to be positive. This was enhanced by tact, cheerfulness, consideration for the other at work (being a 'gentleman'), and humour. Moreover, the analysis revealed that this relational endeavour was justified through work objectives: positive relationships are a way to motivate oneself and others and ensure access to resources (e.g. information or help on a task). Care for other people at work was legitimated by the work benefits as well. Finally, as a result of this instrumentality, Comms employees considered good relationships to be limited in closeness. A certain level of affect in the relationship was deemed beneficial to the work, and was enhanced by sharing non-work anecdotes and experiences. However, getting too close could lead to conflict between caring for the work versus caring for the person. The latter was deemed unprofessional. Comms employees considered that acting professional meant distancing oneself from colleagues so as to focus on work.

The last section of the chapter articulates how Comms employees managed to reconcile positive relationships with workplace instrumentality. People argued that limiting relationships' closeness ensured that work was valued more than a relationship. In consequence, the concern for work prevented people from building closer relationships.

# CHAPTER 5- Relationships at Serv: struggle between caring for the work and caring for the person at work

## Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give an account of the work relationships at Serv. In particular, the work of this chapter responds to research questions including: What are the relationships at Serv? and how are they constructed? Similar to the previous chapter, the chapter is written as a theorised storyline (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007). From an in-depth qualitative analysis of empirical material collected at Serv, the relevant elements have been extracted and re-connected to give a cohesive account of the relationships at Serv at the time of observation (see more on this in chapter 3).

Before going into detail on how relationships are constructed at Serv's workplace, I start from the meaning of work for Serv's employees. In a questionnaire, I asked Serv's employees what does 'Work' evoke to them. This verbal association task unveils the social representation of 'work' (Moscovici, 1961, see chapter 3) at Serv. The results are presented in Table 7 below.

|                           | High average citation rank (> 3)  | Low average citation rank (< 3)  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
|                           | <i>Associated word (frequency ; rank)</i>                               | <i>Associated word (frequency ; rank)</i>                                  |
| High frequency (> 15%)    | Team (50% ; 3.0)  | Responsibility (42% ; 2.4)<br>Colleagues (33% ; 2.0)<br>Salary (33% ; 2,8) |
| Low frequency (11 to 15%) | Exchange (25% ; 6.0)<br>Organisation (25% ; 4.0)<br>Fatigue (17% ; 3.5) | Commitment (25% ; 2.0)<br>Ethics (17% ; 2,0)                               |

Table 7: Social Representation of 'Work' ('Travail') at Serv (N=11)

The most important elements of Table 7 above are on the right up side of the table (highlighted in yellow) because they are the elements that came most frequently and the earliest in the citation. It shows that the elements that define work at Serv are Responsibility (frequency 42%; rank 2.4), Colleagues (frequency 33%; rank 2.0) and Salary (frequency 33%; rank 2.8). Team (frequency 50%; rank 3.0) is also important since it is the most frequently cited element (half of participants mentioned it) and it was cited early (third place on average). Moreover, if I group Colleagues and Team that have close meaning, then this item becomes cited by nearly all respondents. Hence the other persons at work are important in how individuals at Serv conceive of work. The main focus of this chapter will be to understand why and how the other person at work is so significant at Serv. To address this, there are cues in the representation of 'work' at Serv: Responsibility (highly cited) and Ethics (cited early). As I explain in the first part, these elements refer to the perilous mission of Serv that justifies for the role of the team and the need to have supportive relationships with colleagues.

## **I- The accomplishment of a mission driven by values**

When arriving at Serv, I immediately sensed a simplicity that fostered easy interactions. However, I first perceived this simplicity as austerity (see Vignette 9 below), especially in contrast with my experience in ostentatiously wealthy organisations like Comms.

### **Vignette 9**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Down the rabbit hole'

I am right on time at 8.55 in front of the building in a grey and unusually cold morning of August. A discrete sign indicates that the building accommodates some social services of the local area. The street is really quiet; there is nobody around. The door is closed, so it is necessary to ring the reception to get buzzed in. I introduce myself as an appointment for the head of Serv service, the receptionists then look particularly interested in me and direct me towards the waiting room. While I wait, a lady comes at the reception to re-schedule an appointment that she missed due to being hospitalized. A middle-aged man enters also the reception hall and explains to me that he is expecting from the social worker to help him figure out how to get some pension. Leaflets are all over the place to remind that people coming here have plain but essential issues such as health, housing, benefits, or domestic violence. After twenty minutes Gilles, the head of service comes to fetch me. When we meet Gilles complains

that nobody informed him that I had arrived. I follow him in the first floor where Serv offices are.

The corridor is very large, and the five offices that constitute this entity of child protection services are on both sides of the corridor. It is not immediately apparent where Serv offices start and end in the heart of this building dedicated to social services. Paints, tiles and doors are in a light blue tone, quite forgettable. They are in good shape though. The "hot" topic of the week is the heating system. Indeed it is freezing in the offices, so the occupants are organising a petition to have the heating system turned on although it is still August.

After this first impression of plainness, I could start to understand the elements in Serv's workplace that explain the nature and quality of relationships observed: authenticity, an exercise of autonomy in coordinating, and a constant struggle representative of the mission to fostering for children in pain. I link these elements to the phenomenon of work relationships at Serv that are characterized by conviviality, humour, and support. However, these relationships often fall short to be truly caring, so I finish this chapter by discussing the fragility in trying to maintain supportive relationships at Serv.

Serv workplace is primarily characterised by the struggle to fulfil a collective mission of taking care of children in need. Serv employees tackle this mission as professionals. However they are conscious of their individual personalities and personal limitations. Hence, Serv employees have to support in their everyday work two opposite values: personhood and team. Personhood shows through authenticity and autonomy, while the team is evidenced in a will to collaborate and support each other to achieve the mission.

### **Authenticity**

At Serv there is no feeling of artificially abstracting oneself from the world outside to concentrate on the world of work inside. Patterns of interaction do not seem to differ from what could be observed in public spaces. The analysis reveals that this impression comes from the following elements: simplicity of appearances, attention to practical matters at hand, also from a resistance against the formalisation of bureaucracy, and finally from the consideration of the people as whole persons and not as workers only.

### *Simplicity of appearances*

The first impression when entering Serv regards the simplicity of appearances. As excerpted in the vignette 9 above, the place is plain. The building neither presents the comfort of modernity nor the character of age. The small glassed reception room barely looks like a reception as the sign for it is very discreet. There are no signs for finding the child protection service in the building, only the main social service occupying the building is indicated. There are names on the doors of the offices, but they are not up-to-date. This detail does not bother Serv employees. Titles, places, and status signs at work do not matter to them. What matters is that the users that frequently visit Serv know the service already, hence they do not need signs to find it. Serv's workers wear casual clothes but with different styles. Some people dress closer to fashion, for example with jeans and pretty leather-like jackets, make-up and fashion jewellery, while others can be totally out of fashion, for example, darted trousers with a sweatshirt.

### *Attention to practical matters*

The sense of real life is also observable in the attention to practicalities. As part of their job, Serv employees have to deal with basic though essential issues such as making sure a child has enough clothes, or has a means to commute to school. In the same way money, even very small, does matter. For example, there was a meeting where the issue of a young adult was raised. The young adult had to pay fifty Euros to apply for a residence permit as an immigrant and everybody in the meeting spent a long time trying to elaborate on which means they could ensure that the service would pay for it and it would not be expensed to the young adult. This shows both that fifty Euros is an amount worth spending time discussing and that the bureaucracy of social benefit money is complicated to navigate, even for small amounts.

Similarly, in their own work life, Serv employees would allocate much attention to practicalities such as organising lunches, discussing how to go from one place to another, where to store files, or how to reorganise the meeting room. An illustrative example of this attention to practicalities is how to organise tea and coffee in their meeting room. As their main meeting room is in another building five minutes' walk away from their offices, they have to organise the opportunity to drink coffee and tea there. Moreover, this is a

question that takes time and energy to organise as to how to pay for a coffee maker, coffee and tea. They manage to have it paid for on a specific budget from the organisation, but somebody has to take care of shopping for refills when stocks run low. They also wash the dishes after using the cups and spoons. In many offices people benefit from a coffee and tea service and do not have to bother about this. Otherwise, in the case that there is no such service, people could buy their coffee or tea at a coffee house nearby, but the world of Serv is a world where buying one's coffee every day is too costly.

The example of coffee may seem trivial as it is only marginal to their work, however, it shows that they do not benefit from assistance in their work day. This is the case also for issues more directly related to their work tasks. For instance, the social workers, psychologists and head of service do not have assistance in organising their calendar. Secretaries contribute to the service provided to the children mainly as an interface with the bureaucracy imposed by central services. They are filling in or transmitting forms required for all kinds of administrative actions, including payment, leaves of absence of foster families, purchases of clothes and school supplies, or transportation. However, secretaries are not assistants. They have tasks that do not revolve around assisting the work of the social workers.

### *Deconstructing the bureaucracy*

The perception of authenticity at Serv also rests in the undermining of bureaucracy. During observation, I was struck by how insignificant work roles are for Serv employees. Serv employees actively deconstruct the artificial world of bureaucracies. Serv is one of the services organised by the local authority that rests extensively on a strong hierarchy and formal rules. Each person has a formal role, each service has a formal mission, and all decisions refer to central services with a clearly identified hierarchy. However, Serv as a team has detached itself as much as possible from this bureaucracy. The head of service plays an active role in this process. For instance, he only relays to people in the team information that he has filtered as relevant and important, thus undermining the importance of central services. He also questions regularly the differences in roles between secretaries, social workers and psychologists. There are differences in the day-to-day work as they each have specific tasks in handling a child situation. However, at the same time he is

emphasising how everybody can contribute to any topic. For example, there are work times every month centred on a social worker in which the corresponding secretary (corresponding because assigned with the same children) takes part, as well as the psychologist and the head of service. During these times anybody can contribute to the analysis of the situation or gathering of information, even though such tasks are centred on the social worker who is primarily in contact with the children.

Moreover, the secretaries are invited to come to synthesis meetings, which focus on a child and gather all partners involved in fostering the child. In practice, secretaries do not often come because, depending on their experience in child protection services, they often do not feel legitimate in these meetings. Compared to other teams in the local area, secretaries are not invited to join synthesis meetings. In other teams, secretaries are dedicated to administrative tasks that are not seen in direct relation to the protection of the children. Another example of this undermining of bureaucracy from the head of service is that he pushes the team to self-organise and positions himself as a guide rather than as a hierarchical supervisor. The head of service, Gilles, resists defining roles and tasks of people in his team. On the contrary, he asks for them to do it themselves through exchanges. As a result, people organise their work by themselves:

*'That's the freedom to say to myself that I'm ... I'm clear with myself, I have not done this, I may have lost time at times, maybe I've seen again some persons who were not ... It was not urgent, I managed, I do my thing and then ... And then, here, I make do with it by myself, the report is done and that's it.'* (Christine)

Equally, Gilles resists the hierarchical power of his supervisors. He explains that he strives for freeing himself and his team from the hierarchical control of the organisation:

*'Gilles: Well I have to say here nobody pisses us, that's it we are not... we are a bit at the borders; we manage the team as we want and everybody is happy with it and then ... as a result nobody comes to take a closer look for that matter.'*

*Me:* A very autonomous management.

*Gilles: Yeah, yes I enjoy a very autonomous managing, yes. On this side my Director leaves me the hell alone.'*

*People as whole persons, not only as workers*

In relation to this authentic atmosphere in the workplace, individuals at Serv are considered persons and not solely workers. This consideration can be seen in the acknowledgement of personal lives. For instance, personal constraints are taken into account in the organisation regarding working hours or allocating appointments at distant locations. When they talk about who is going to attend a meeting that starts at 5 pm in a distant city, they check with the person if she is going to be able to deal with childcare.

The consideration of the person is also expressed during interviews. For instance, the human side was evoked in opposition to instrumental functionality at work because '*we are not robots*' (Maelle). Overall there is this shared understanding that workers are not only workers, but they are whole persons:

*'I am a person and I can't split myself...well when I am at work I carry who I am and with my story'* (Marie-Claire).

People do not conceal that they have a life out of the office, including family responsibilities. When Marie-Claire is in a meeting in her office with a lady from a foster family, she still answers a personal call after excusing herself, and she dismisses the caller by stating: '*I am in a work appointment, I'll call you later*'. Hence she does not conceal that this is a personal call (she tells me later that it was her daughter).

Pregnancy is a specific situation that demonstrates the acknowledgement of personal life at work. Two pregnancies were ongoing during the observation, and in both cases it was the important topic in the interactions between the pregnant person and the others. People were exchanging about it with the pregnant women who could show pride and happiness, or express anxiety or struggle to cope with work.

Overall, people know about each other's personal life despite not discussing it often. However, they have been working together long enough that they are aware of each other's personal life. This can be seen in an exchange during Alizée's interview:

*Alizée: 'But I find it does well because it has been a long time since we didn't have babies at Serv*

*Me: Oh really [laughing]*

*Alizée: Yes, it makes me...[laughing]. Yes, well there were those of Maelle then but before Maelle, well, I don't know who are the youngest.'*

*Me: Then how old are Maelle's?*

*Alizée: They are six and...seven and four, well I think so.'*

### **Coordinating in autonomy**

At Serv, employees are considered responsible persons who can drive their jobs in autonomy, and as a result, they make effort to maintain a level of interdependency. I have underlined that Serv employees endeavour to self-organise rather than to rely on a hierarchical power to attribute cases, appointments, meetings, and responsibilities. However, this self-organising happens at the team level. This can be seen in the practice of working out the calendars collectively. It is striking in the observation that they spend much time exchanging for organising their calendars. As soon as they have a free minute during a meeting, they will take advantage of being at the same place at the same time to check with somebody else when they can organise an appointment or meeting. At first, it seems like a lot of wasted time. In many organisations, one person would be in charge of calendars, coordinating the different calendars in the team, which is made easy by the use of shared digital calendars. Instead, they each have a diary book and have to sit with other people to look for common slots: the secretary will contact parents or foster families and know their constraints, the head of service or another social worker, and the psychologist in case she needs to attend the meeting as well. However, this diary 'dance' is more than just a question of managing one's working time. As Vignette 10 below outlines, this diary dance engages the mission provided, the individual's liberty in organising, as well as the commitment to the team.

### Vignette 10

Excerpt from the field notes. 'The diary dance'

Dealing with timetables is a great part of the team work. Between the hearings, the syntheses, the appointments (with children, parents, host families), the home visits all over the area (very large, as it is outlined very often), the mediated visits, and the team meetings, arranging timetables is a puzzle. Naturally, the most pressured are the social workers who have to be at all the types of appointments mentioned above. Moreover, for the sake of practical considerations sometimes the person in charge of the situation cannot be the one following the whole process, which is not ideal in term of quality of the work. For example, it is a usual rule that when there are several hearings in a row only one person will attend all of them even if she is not in charge of all the situations (especially the hearings are in a bigger town 45 minutes drive away). The assumption is that the person will debrief with other persons in charge but even if she does it is not really the same as being there (as Gilles acknowledged).

As a matter of fact, I don't see very well how they split the files. I am wondering if everybody should be able to follow everything. This may be due to this difficulty of organising; as I have been told later, everybody should know some of every situation. But the 'know some' is very blurry, maybe it is not really sharing information but rather sharing responsibility.

Then this kind of meeting is centred around the timetables; everybody has his diary book opened and look over the different appointments. It seems that this review of appointments – checking that people are synchronised- allows for going over hot topics because they stop every time that a discussion is needed.

Firstly, working out calendars is a visible tip of the iceberg of the work on a child's situation. Going through appointments allows for raising issues of all sort such as is there any issue with his foster family, is it time to set a synthesis meeting with other partners taking care of the child, or how are mediated visits with parents going. In addition, the review and elaboration of a child's situation ends with checking that the appropriate meetings have been set. The range of appointments is broad, for instance visiting the child in his foster family, visiting the child in his birth family, meeting parents, the child and/or the foster family in Serv's offices, 'synthesis' meetings with partners taking care of the child, Judge hearings, team meetings, case meetings, 'practice' meetings for social workers to reflect on their practice. Every child's situation is unique and has to be addressed with an original set of measures and actions. Some situations require a judge's ruling, while others do not. In some cases, it is beneficial to the child to sever him from his parents while in others, the team will make sure that he sees his parents on a regular basis. Some situations necessitate visiting the child at the place he is living, but in

other cases, it is preferable to meet him in a neutral place like Serv's offices. Hence all these meetings and appointments represent the outcome of constant evaluation and re-evaluation of the situation of the child and what the child needs so as to develop harmoniously.

Furthermore, the diary dance also underpins the dialectic between individuals' liberties and dependency on the team. People are free to organise their diaries at will, which allows them to negotiate between personal constraints, what is best for the child, as well as for the other persons in the situation. However, the team is an important support to succeed in this negotiation. The number of appointments in different places is challenging, and it is much easier to cope as a team than as individuals. For instance, judge hearings are all at the same place, one hour drive away from Serv's offices, so when there are several hearings in a day, most of the time the same social worker or head of service will attend all hearings, despite he or she not being in charge of the particular child addressed at each hearing. Arrangements like this allow people to save time and reduce triggers of fatigue. However, it also emphasises a sharing of responsibility. People are not alone in charge of the fate of a child; the team is supportive. Of course it is preferable that the person in charge attend all the meetings and appointments related to the children she is in charge of, but in case she is not able to, the child will not be let down because other people in the team can do the job as well. Consequently, the diary dance allows also for sharing responsibility with the team.

Sharing responsibility in the team for a child in custody is critical considering the strain that is felt from this responsibility. In the next section, I analyse the struggles felt by Serv's workers in their everyday work life that underpins the quality of relationships at Serv.

### **Fostering children in pain: a constant struggle**

#### *Pressure from the stakes*

At Serv there is a huge pressure on work performance and this pressure does not come from people's commitment to organisational goals, but rather from their perceived responsibility to alleviate children's suffering and offer them better opportunities for their lives. They express clearly this pressure to succeed in their mission as the interview excerpts below illustrate vividly.

*'This job is complicated, that's true that this job at Serv is difficult because we carry plenty of things plus you are referent of a situation then you're necessarily responsible when it goes to shit.'* (Alexia)

Alexia insists on the responsibility she feels for helping the children in need. She refers to her own personal limitations (*'we carry plenty of things'*). Léa (excerpt below) is a secretary, hence she is not in charge of a child's situation directly, however she does feel the pressure, especially in comparison to her previous experience in another public service job:

*'Where I was in the road department, there was not so much pressure. Here one feels really that it is this aspect, well one works with humans then... it is... well, everything is urgent and can't be let go... one can't let things happen then...'* (Léa)

Even though Léa is not officially in charge, she feels responsible. Maelle is a social worker and is then in charge of children's situations. She expresses her feeling of responsibility for 'their life' strongly, that does not come from her commitment to the organisation:

*'It is not a pressure from the hierarchy, it is not a pressure from the judge, it is a pressure that I put because I work with children and also because their life is at stake, it is about their future.'* (Maelle)

Nathalie expresses as well her feeling of responsibility towards the child, and also towards other people who care about the child. For her, this responsibility is heavy because their work is uncertain, and they can never be sure to be right:

*'Yes, it is not easy because we... well, we work with some... with humans, with children and parents also who... for whom yes we do... our decisions have... consequences on the child, on the family, on the larger family, well these are things that are not... yes, that are not easy and then... decisions on... well, we draw hypotheses then after maybe our hypotheses are wrong then it is not... it is not always easy.'* (Nathalie)

#### *Emotional distress*

The feeling of responsibility for children's life triggers stress for Serv

workers, and the 'diary dance' (Vignette 10) can also be interpreted as the expression of the difficulty to deal with all their responsibilities. It shows the complexity of coordinating a multiplicity of partners engaged in serving the child's best interest. All these meetings represent the search for the right responses to a child's hardship. At the centre of work is the question of the child's development. A great deal of the effort regards collaborating on the analysis of the situation and the appropriate responses to it. However, they know they will not always succeed. There is an understanding that despite everybody doing their best, it might not be enough. As a result, Serv employees sometimes feel powerless and hopeless, which constitutes a considerable strain on their work and non-work life, as Christine, an experienced social worker, expresses:

*'So ... Yeah, yeah. Yeah. There are situations like that that come back, in our heads all night but we have to... Here, you have to get clear and then find a ... A way to share, yes. Well, already sharing how we endure things, and then how we can organise them. Eh, there are two levels, there's how we endure things because ... Here it is, a kid like that, nobody wants him, we tell ourselves well, what do we do with him? What do we do with him? We're not gonna leave him under roofs, he's 16, we're not gonna leave him ... without anything. Eh, that's hard still at times and not finding a solution for him. Telling oneself that nobody wants him then. That's the harsh reality, there are times 'woohoo!' during the night to tell oneself but what does he do there? How can he still stand? Why hasn't he yet committed suicide so [laughs]! No but ... The kids! How do they manage to keep standing? Even we are all ... We tell each other ... It is not possible to feel as much rejection and abandonment from everyone, we just have to ... Yeah' (Christine).*

The previous quote from Christine's interview shows how the pressure to help these children comes from empathetic emotions. The fact that they work with children 'in becoming' is both a source of great satisfaction and painful stress. It is possible to have an impact on their whole life, but also their whole life is at stake, and sometimes they know their fate is set. Sometimes they know that there is not much they can do to alleviate pain from a situation

that is that terrible. As a result, Serv employees are often struggling with this reality, which leads to negative feelings such as guilt and powerlessness.

For example, Alizée realises that sometimes they have to take care of the children of people that were already in custody of the service a decade or two ago. She acknowledges their failure in the interview:

*Alizée: 'It is not reassuring. '*

*Me: No?*

*Alizée: It means we haven't been very good.'*

The job is harder to handle for some people than for others. Maelle struggles emotionally with the job. A reason why, she thinks, is that she has young children and thinks that '*as a mum, you are in constant questioning*' because of the purpose of the job to deal with other parents' failures. She explains that she cannot quit because she needs the money, but she also feels guilty when she thinks about quitting.

#### *Difficulty of diagnosis*

The work on a child's situation consists of evaluating how the child is doing, projecting whether he is going to be able to develop properly (physically and psychically), and what should be done to increase his chances of developing harmoniously. These are recurring questions that are never settled with certainty. Serv employees see the situations that children are dealing with in a complex way. Christine expresses this complexity:

*'Yes on what is at play through foster care, it is so complex that if one does not try not to put meaning in it and then analysis, well one reacts a little in ... Yes one reacts ... One question that's it, one answer, one problem one solution and that's it, it has to be effective, end of story, but one does not ask the right questions then in my opinion.'*  
(Christine)

To deal with this complexity, Serv employees have to constantly re-evaluate their judgment, based on the first-hand or second-hand information. The numerous meetings are mostly based on getting this information and elaborating the analysis accordingly. Sometimes they feel they have all figured out and feel confident about their work, but sometimes they feel lost, conscious that they do not get the situation and dreading that their

incompetence is jeopardising the child's future. Vignette 11 below illustrates this difficulty of making sense of the right thing to do and the discouragement of not finding the answer.

### **Vignette 11**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Struggle to make sense'

Marie-Claire expects guidance from Gilles: 'And so, what can we do?'. Gilles offers a solution but is not very convinced. People go blank. Then Nathalie adds something. When they don't know what to do, they look a bit scared. And the guilt from not doing the right thing, Nathalie: 'as a result we contribute to denial'. Sometimes things don't make sense: 'Yeah I tell myself that it is complicated...uh... I don't know' (Marie-Claire).

The remark from Nathalie in Vignette 11 that they 'contribute to denial' illustrates how they use psychodynamic systems in their analysis. In particular, the framework that they use systematically to try and make sense of the situation is to check whether each person and organisation around the child are at the right place. 'Place' means the embodiment of a role in a psychodynamic system. Below are two examples of this reference to finding one's place. Vignette 12 illustrates the search for meaning in their place in the network of people and organisations intervening on children protection services.

### **Vignette 12**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Finding meaning in the network of partners'

Alexia tries to make sense of her place in this as well: 'what is this synthesis meeting about? Actually I don't see which...' Gilles replies 'I don't know' and she continues: 'I don't see my place as a Serv representative, I don't see what the hell I would do in a Sector's synthesis about a case that...'. And they keep discussing what happened and the potential explanations.

Vignette 13 below illustrates the difficulty for social workers to find their place in the child's situation. Maelle is not accepted by the parents of a child in custody. A great part of Serv's work is to make parents understand the rationales for placing their child and the parent's responsibility in the placement. However, parents often experience the placement as unjust and cruel and blame Serv for it, which can lead to social workers '*not finding their place*' as Maelle explains.

### **Vignette 13**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'I couldn't find my place'

And on the way back Maelle tells me about the mediated visit that she just had at the parents' home. The parents had not been kind to her. They are angry that their child has been placed and don't understand the measure. The mother had a psychiatric breakdown and had to go to the psychiatric hospital, which triggered the placement in the first place, that they understand. But they don't understand why it didn't stop right away when she came back home. It was very difficult for Maelle to find her place: 'I couldn't find my place', both physically – they didn't provide her with a chair in the gloomy kitchen underground- and symbolically – they didn't answer her questions.

This search for one's place is part of the quest for meaning in children's situations. The children they foster are lost, and they need to give back meaning to them. As a result, each action of social services has to have a meaning, and they will criticise heavily any partner that would not contribute to this endeavour to give meaning to the situation. Vignette 14 shows Alexia criticising the Children Foster House (CFH) for losing meaning in their actions for the benefit of practical matters.

### **Vignette 14**

Excerpt from the notes on video recordings. 'The importance of giving meaning'

Alexia adds something on it, reading at her notes 'in relation to what we said last week "who goes with in mediated visit, who, why and the meaning". Because quite often one hour before the mediated visit they call the secretaries' office to say "well actually I am by myself with the group, I can't be away, can the Serv Educator come to fetch the kid?". We do it as a favour because it is close by and all but I think it has no meaning, to do a mediated visit of a kid with his parent, we are going to fetch him hurriedly at the annexe, to come back with him to the annexe, I think it has no meaning. Accompanying a kid in a mediated visit, really it should bear meaning for them as a representative of the Children Foster House then. It is not merely about bringing him and dropping him at the CFH then!'

This search for meaning shows the complexity of finding meaning in the child's situation and in the measures that are taken to improve it. Hence evaluating a child's situation and what are appropriate measures has to be constantly re-evaluated, both because the situation will evolve, like in reacting to measures or other factors, and because the measures that were envisioned do not occur as planned.

#### *Difficulty of implementing appropriate measures*

Serv employees' mission is difficult because it is based on an uncertain

diagnosis, but also because it relies on people outside of Serv that they have little influence on, like foster partners or parents. Vignette 14 above illustrates how they are not happy with the educators of the foster structure that accommodate some of the children they take care of. Similarly, they often complain about foster families that they have to entrust with children while they would rather not. In theory, they are supposed to choose the foster family that would be particularly suitable for a particular child, but in fact, foster families are scarce resources. The job is difficult, and there are few candidates. The excerpt in Vignette 15 below illustrates their concern about the competence of foster families.

### **Vignette 15**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'She is getting on their nerves'

Facts are very important to make sense of the reality. For example, when the Foster Family (FF) of one of the girl is describing her as a non-issue girl, as if everything was always fine, then Maelle would remind that she has had violent anger episodes, and that she rejects the foster family totally. Later Gilles will tell me that this Mrs. FF tends to say things totally at odd with what is really going on. Serv people are listening to her quietly, but they will burst into expressions of irritation against her on the way back. Apparently, she is really annoying, distorting reality all the time, always concerned about giving a good image of herself. So they will say she is the Barbie doll, they will say they can't stand her, that she is always damaging the endeavours of Nathalie (telling to the children that psychologists are useless, forgetting about appointments, and so on). This can explain that I noticed that the session was particularly quiet, steady, linear, and also that Maelle is the one punctuating the session with conclusions (whereas usually Gilles does it, but he is a bit set back in this session).

Vignette 15 illustrates how much they can criticise a foster family. In the case of this person, Serv employees have difficulties to bear her at all. Probably they are so annoyed by this person because they feel Mrs. FF is not doing a good job with the children, but they cannot do anything about it. Vignette 16 below shows the practical matter that leads Serv to keep a foster family working with them while they would rather not, for example, a shortage of foster solutions. They have to work with some of these foster families because they have limited choices.

### **Vignette 16**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Foster families are scarce resources'

We start with a situation in relation with Mrs. Foster Family (FF), the statement is 'something is not right', and they go quickly to the problem of the FF herself rather than the child. They would like to get rid of her because she has proved in other situations that she can't work properly, but then Christine raises the issue that they

need relay family over the summer (i.e. replacements for a few days when foster families take their holidays). Then the sad state of things is that everybody seems to agree that she doesn't provide a good service, but Serv can't make it without her because the service is so short of foster families at the moment. It seems it is always a rare resource, but they have reached a crisis. They are in the process of trying to hire new foster families but it is not so easy, there aren't many candidates, and even among them they don't always seem trustworthy enough.

Another practical constraint in the implementation of appropriate measures relates to their own availabilities. For instance, they agree it would be better for the very social worker in charge of a child to attend the judge's hearings. At the same time, they have such difficulties to fit in all their appointments in their diaries that they rather have the same person attending all the hearings on the same day. Similarly, they have to lower their quality standards by not attending some potentially important moments such as 'arms changing' (i.e. when a child leaves a foster family to see his or her parents, or vice-versa) because it would mean lots of time lost in travel for a few minutes of 'arms changing' that have few chances to go badly.

Often they feel they know what should be done, but a Judge's ruling of placement is too short to allow them to do something meaningful about it: *'Two months is too short to even start working'* (Gilles).

Another important source of difficulty is the criticality of the situation of the child. The level of harshness and complexity is an element that they cannot control and that impacts on their ability to have an impact on the situation. As a doctor who is powerless in front of the seriousness of the illness, Serv's workers are sometimes doomed to failure because of the seriousness of the parents' impairment (see Vignette 17 below).

### **Vignette 17**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Sharing to cope with emotional distress'

They express how the parents are unmanageable in the situation, how they can't do any work [...] and are attacked by the parents all the time. There is a lot of emotion, violence that they have to make sense of, that they have to elaborate to be able to process them and in the end to treat the situation. I feel how they need to elaborate, to share, about this situation.

On many occasions, the assessment of the situation of a particular child or her parent stresses the seriousness of the situation. For example, Gilles states: *'I think that this mother is toxic, she is pathogenic, she is seriously pathogenic towards her daughter'*. In another occasion when a situation that

does not develop positively due to a mother that they deem '*poisonous*' Gilles regrets: '*poor child, he is off to a bad start*'.

Finally, Serv workers feel sometimes unable to deal with the situation, and they do acknowledge this. For example, during her meeting with the mother in a foster family the assessment of Marie-Claire is definitive and regretful: '*Child, I can't work with her*'. Another example is when Maelle asks for help to deal with a situation where the foster family and the child have different versions of a story about threatening with knives. Maelle and Gilles suspect that the mother is manipulating her child into telling a fake story, but they need to be careful in their reaction not to enact the mother's power in the situation. Hence, Maelle feels overwhelmed with the situation and acknowledges her incapacity in that matter: '*about the knives story, what do we do? Because I don't feel like doing it by myself*'.

It is interesting that in these instances they would openly tell their incapacity and asks for help. It shows two important assumptions underpinning their work. Firstly, it shows that it is not expected of them to be infallible, as Gilles sadly states about a child: '*we had it all wrong*'. Secondly, it also shows that they expect help from the team to make up for this incapacity. The team is an important value at Serv and one of the reasons why they cherish work relationships. I expand this latter point in the following section.

## **II-Relationships at Serv: struggle for care**

I have discussed previously how the responsibility felt to accomplish a mission pervades Serv's organising. Individuals experience this mission as important for children's lives but complex, sometimes unachievable, and can induce stress. Authenticity can be interpreted as a way of coping. This social mission is anchored in hardship and necessitates for employees to use who they are as persons in their work. Similarly, the importance of the team and coordination comes from a strategy to cope with the difficulty of the mission. These features of the workplace shape the relationships at Serv. The sense of authenticity allows for caring for each other. The need to collaborate enhances the endeavour to have good work relationships. The stress from the mission requires supporting each other. Hence, coping with the social mission drives

individuals to sustain convivial, humorous, and supporting relationships. However, the difficulty of the mission also has an opposite effect: the resources that people allocate to accomplish their social mission sometimes deprive them of the capacity to care for each other. As a result, a tension arises to maintain solidarity in practice.

## **Conviviality**

### **Vignette 18**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Service project meeting'

They also joke about the coming Friday where they are going to work the whole day on the service project, including the afternoon that is normally off (for all services organised by the local authority). Gilles: 'You did agree', Christine, laughing: 'well we regret it'. Then Gilles states that they also planned another day: 'we set a date in September...on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October', everybody is laughing at the idea that the September day is in October which stands for the usual struggle to find dates that suit everybody, considering the diaries of the social workers are full with appointments.

The atmosphere of the meeting is overall very relaxed; people are laughing at themselves not having worked a bit on the service project as they were supposed to. It seems that they are just happy to enjoy themselves and enjoy being together. At the end of the meeting, nothing will have been done, except exchanging some information on what is going on at work. But indeed they don't have so many of these informal talks, so it seems that the meeting muted in this. For example, they discuss the local elections (first round was yesterday, second round next Sunday) as it may have an impact on them, given they belong to a local authority that may change its political orientations. They also discuss rumours about re-organising the direction of Serv services in the local area.

The conviviality is overwhelming at Serv as Vignette 18 above illustrates. People are happy to be with each other and show it by smiling, being cheerful, sharing tea and coffee, and exchanging intensely with each other. It appears that people take pleasure from such mutual exchange. Mostly they exchange news about work though. For instance, when they see each other after a few days of holiday break they exchange a few words on the holidays but immediately turn to talk about the children or the parents, the foster families, or other work-related topic.

### *Conviviality as informality*

Moreover, the conviviality results also from the informality of exchanges. This informality reflects the authenticity that I described

previously. People use lots of familiar or even vulgar expressions within the team. For instance, during a quiet morning, Gilles is hanging out in Christine's and Maelle's office. Alexia comes to talk to Gilles as the door is open. She addresses Gilles with 'vous' (the French polite 'you') as usual, but when he teases her about him being the boss, she replies '*don't give a damn!*' in a joking tone. Just after that Laura enters the office to ask if Gilles has five minutes. He answers: '*But you are all pissing me off*' on an unmistakably funny tone. Gilles then asks Christine when they are going to find time to do her annual performance review, and she replies '*that is not of critical matter*', which also shows their general disregard for administrative tasks.

Another day during a team meeting Alexia raises concern about booking a table at the restaurant for a get together at lunch. She intervenes to say: '*Ah, I need to call the restaurant. Can we have a break?*'. However, somebody already did it hence her intervention is off the wall. Hence several people answer: '*that's done!*' and people laugh about it, so Gilles teases her: '*But what did you smoke this morning? She just did it now!*'. This informality of exchanges appears because of use of a familiar register of language, also because of the disregard for authority, and finally because of the use of humour.

#### *Joking to connect*

These exchanges illustrate as well how humour was part of the conviviality. Having fun is a way to cheer up the ambience. Vignette 19 below illustrates this effort.

### **Vignette 19**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Humour to deconstruct hierarchy'

|   |
|---|
| Arlette teasing Gilles: 'you did manage to read your own writing?', Gilles: 'But how impertinent!' and then 'No, that's true sometimes I can't read my own handwriting, I need to talk to my shrink about it', then he turns to Nathalie, laughing, and she adds: 'But he died', Gilles, falsely serious: 'that's the issue'. This is obviously an old joke between them. Arlette is indeed a bit more 'impertinent' than usual because she has been irritated by her not being called for the meeting. Gilles is exaggerating the joking to soothe the atmosphere. |
|---|

In other instances humour is also used to enhance bonding. Serv employees do not assess each other. As they consider that they work with their psychological resources, assessing individual performance would seem odd

and artificial. This oddness can be seen in Vignette 20 below where they are teasing somebody for being confused about street names. They take the performance review as a joke.

### **Vignette 20**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Ridiculing performance reviews'

At some point, Alexia is confused between Republic street and Liberation street, so she makes a bit of a fool of herself, then jokes about both being the same. So Gilles looks at Nathalie and says 'take a note' with a gesture of writing as if he was assessing Alexia negatively. This shows the closeness between the three of them. It also shows how ridiculous is the idea of being assessed during their work.

This latter excerpt shows the informality of exchange and how teasing each other is a way of enhancing closeness, of bonding. It is a usual, almost systematic interaction style from the head of service. When he teases somebody, the person is happy about it, he or she smiles and tries to joke back at him. By ridiculing the critique, he expresses that he is not exercising his hierarchical authority and creates a place safe from judgment from him. The exchange below illustrates this ridiculing of hierarchical powers in the team. Amandine is an intern, and they joke about her being on the lower scale of the ladder.

### **Vignette 21**

Excerpt from the notes on video recordings. 'The intern takes power'

- and then for the monograph since I'm at it...I keep [laughs] (Amandine)  
- The floor ! (Others)  
- I ...I mobilise (Amandine)  
- keep it! (Others)  
- I mobilise (Amandine)  
Gilles teases: 'She really takes liberties; it is about time that your internship goes to an end. Well, and so?'. People laugh and she goes on, proposing to come back in May to give feedback on her essay.

The exchanges above show the participation of others in the team as cheerful teasing. It seems that everybody is prone to participate in the collective understanding to ridicule the formal authority. Because of this shared understanding, Gilles can tease his 'subordinates' and they understand he is only joking.

#### *Breach: authority is awkward*

Gilles is definitely the leader of the team. He is the one people go to in order to validate their choices or to ask for help. With his twenty years of

experience in child protection, he appears knowledgeable and able to take care of all sorts of situations. Hence, overall people listen to him. However, if Gilles starts being directive, acting like a boss who has formal authority and expects that people do what he says without question, things become uneasy, showing that it is unexpected. The vignette below illustrates this awkwardness with a short tension about Alexia who is late for a report to the judge.

### **Vignette 22**

Excerpt from the notes on video recordings. 'Official duties and awkward authority'

Alexia looks at Gilles quite intensively to ask him if he needs her report before going to the hearing, he answers right away 'not at all' so she goes back to her note taking. Everybody has a notebook or a calendar book (Gilles) opened, but clearly, Nathalie and Alexia are the ones in the attitude of note-taking, whereas Gilles is in the attitude of instruction-giving.

Then there is a bit of an unpleasant exchange between them as he recalls to her the right way to function:

- 'I remind you about the reports that I correct them, I amend them, I rectify them, alright?' (Gilles)

- 'But you were in holidays' Alexia replies on the tone of expressing something obvious, hesitating between being rough or joking, still smiling, but I can feel she is hurt a little bit.

- 'and I do them in holidays', with a very, very soft voice.

She sends him a quick look, and makes a noise 'tss', from which he understands that she is asking for a concession from him, he concedes it:

- 'no, but your report was nice.'

- 'thanks', not looking at him

- 'sometimes you lose yourself a little bit in... in details but this time less...'

He continues explaining a little bit and then comes back to the initial point: 'no, no, but I do have a clear memory of the situation, the situation that bothers me is really Child...' and keeps elaborating on this one. So he got round the issue of her report not being good enough, that's not the topic of the conversation anymore.

### **Humour: having fun, because children's situations are not**

I have discussed how joking has a function of ridiculing hierarchical authority, and of connecting with each other. It had another important function in relationships at Serv as a way of coping with the stress that could come from the harshness of the children's situation and the doubts on their ability to tackle it. I was first struck how the cheerfulness in relationships came in contrast with the struggle to deal with harsh situations. However, the more I felt the sadness of situations and their struggle to take care of the children, the more I felt relieved by the jokes and the cynicism about the situations.

The cheerfulness observed most of the time was also an attitude of defiance against the misfortunes they were trying to combat. This attitude can

be observed in particular through the constant joking about the absurdity of many situations and mocking of the quality of their organisation.

Gilles is particularly eloquent and is self-asserted, hence he often comes up with striking declarations making fun of their struggle, such as joking about suicide: *'If we add the confusion of everybody's role then we could as well hang ourselves'*. He also jokes about a story describing a situation where things did not evolve the right way, because of a decision from the judge that did not go in the direction he expected. Gilles asserts: *'so it is not worth working, we could as well go and sell doughnuts'*. Everybody enjoys his humour. It shows that Serv employees often feel powerless regarding their mission, and making fun of hopeless situations is a way to stay cheerful. They mock their organisation, and the parents of children in custody. For instance, Gilles makes fun of the insanity of a parent: *'it was absolutely abstruse, it would drive you mad, it comes about right since he already was.'* (Gilles). Joking about the mental health of the parents can seem cruel, but this is a way of coping with frustration and sadness. Their power to help children whose parents suffer from actual serious mental health issues is limited.

*Breach: when the sadness overcomes*

This way of joking about harsh and serious situations may seem rude, but it is a way of coping with the sadness and despair that can otherwise appear, as I observe in one instance. What confirms that the displayed cynicism is really a way to cope with the harshness of the situation is the true sadness, instead of joking, that appears when no solution emerges. They deal with harsh situations, with children who cry out for their parents' love that will never come, with parents who are dealing with mental illness and drug addictions, with infants being separated from their parents. Vignette 23 below illustrates one of these moments of doubt and sadness.

**Vignette 23**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'We also have our share in this shit'

At the end of the meeting they are still not very happy with their conclusion, still doubting of their sensemaking of the situation. 'I don't know how it is going to turn out, I am not convinced' (Gilles) and Nathalie answers 'me neither'. Gilles adds: 'We also have our share in this shit'. It appears to me that there is a significant part of gut feelings in their sensemaking and here it doesn't feel right.

This sadness and sense of guilt are rarely happening despite the

seriousness of situations, but when despair happens, it shows that people are moved, and the cheerfulness of interaction is a way to cope emotionally with it.

### **Supportive relationships**

To cope with the complexity of the mission and the emotional distress it can incur, Serv employees strive to support each other. First, they provide on-the-job support as a collective problem-solving approach. Moreover, they also go beyond merely perfunctory tasks and care for each other on a more personal level.

#### *On-the-job support*

In response to the difficulty of everyday work, workers at Serv rely on each other for support. Overall, helping each other is a common practice that comes naturally. People care about the children they are in charge of, and a way to take care of them is to support each other on the job. This support is expected for the two kinds of difficulties that infuse the work: difficulty in evaluating the situation and choosing the appropriate measures to address the issue in question, and difficulty in implementing the measures. For the former, they insist in the value of exchanging ideas. The difficult practice of evaluating is a team exercise. Usually, the social worker in charge of the child exposes the situation and the measures that have been taken so far, as well as the reaction of the child to the measures. Other members of the team ask questions or add information they may have on the situation. The social worker answers, reacts, elaborates hypotheses and another round of questions or comments starts. This iteration stops when the social worker has a plausible idea of the situation and decisions have been taken (by her or by the head of service) about the next steps. This 'technical' support is truly appreciated as the extract from Marie-Claire's interview outlines.

Me: Because the team provides what ?

Marie-Claire: *It provides...it provides support, it provides a... Yeah, you can share, you... you feel you're not alone.*

Me: Mmmm.

Marie-Claire: *It provides, yes, sometimes reassurance or...Also sometimes...well, you...actually it can be seen...here you haven't*

*thought about doing...about looking at things from this angle, eh, because sometimes you were embedded in your case and you look at it from a certain angle and the other person can come and tell you you did not think about it, ah well no, I did not think and as a result it opens up something else then.'*

Colleagues also help provide practical solutions for implementing the measures that have been decided. Vignette 24 below illustrates the support on the difficulty to apply the measures. In a case like this, a social worker needs to find a foster family for a child, and everybody feels concern to try to find a solution.

#### **Vignette 24**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Dealing with an issue collectively'

Laura takes the floor to explain that the son of a mother of a foster family is ill, he has to go through surgery. It is hard for the mother, so she took a leave of absence. So they are talking about how to deal with the children she has in custody. She called Alexia then so Alexia takes the floor to explain the different issues, and everybody brings ideas for whom could take each child at which moment.

#### *Struggling for support*

Supporting each other is considered the good way to work together. However, this is not always easy to sustain. The problem is often the lack of time as Maelle expresses: *'Well, Serv's culture I would say it is a lot of work'*. As a result *'it is not easy to hold out a hand to the other colleague'* (Alexia). Vignette 25 below illustrates one of these instances when it appears that helping each other is not easy.

#### **Vignette 25**

Excerpt from the notes on video recordings. 'Who takes care of the new intern?'

Christine raises the issue of Sabine working only every two weeks whereas she is supposed to tutor the new intern. Gilles says he won't take care of her all of Monday morning, and asks: 'no but who takes her Monday morning? Who is there on Monday morning? Christine?' Christine answers: 'We are all here', understanding this is not a yes Gilles continues: 'Laura?'. Not willing to assign responsibility on this touchy topic he says that the intern does not have to be on somebody's shoulder in particular: 'she will go from one office to another, navigating'. But they react on this that it is not the right way to do.

Then it appears it is not only the problem of this Monday when she arrives. Alexia: 'the matter of overseeing her, not overseeing her, that is related to what we were saying about our latest intern, it is true that it took a really long time before we let her do things by herself, and still then it was difficult.' she looks around at her colleagues 'so

here if... she does not know at all, if she is young...well here it is, it might take time to let her... get sorted by herself' and explains that at least the first month she needs assistance, she needs time. Time is always an issue. Everybody is quiet.

The story of finding time to take care of the new intern shows the concern for the intern that people have not yet met. It shows the tension that can arise between different responsibilities: taking care of the new intern instead of other duties that people have on the job or outside of the job. They do want to live up to the ideal of care and care for the new intern, but it takes time, which is a scarce resource for them. Taking care of an intern is conflicting with taking care of their mission because they seem to think that the intern does not provide sufficient help with the accomplishment of their tasks.

*Breach: The unsupportive organisation*

While Serv employees are striving to support each other, they notice the absence of support from central services, who they feel are only concerned with saving money or looking good for political matters and do not care about the employees. This critique shows their norm of care for people at work and how the bureaucratic perspective does not match with it. This can be seen in the low score of caring climate that comes out from the questionnaires. Results show a mean of 2.89 (N=11;  $\sigma=.55$ ) while it was 2.60 at Comms (N=83;  $\sigma=.76$ ), on a five-point scale. It is interesting to see that the mean is lower than in previous research. For instance, the same questions have yielded a mean of 3.13 (N=476;  $\sigma=1.09$ ) in a large insurance company in Mainland China (Fu and Deshpande, 2014) and 3.33 (N=408;  $\sigma=.29$ ) in 24 high-technology firms in Taiwan (Wang and Hsieh, 2013). This measure accounts for the caring climate in the organisation, in this case, the local authority that organises the children protection service and many other social and public services. It reflects an overall feeling of lack of care from the senior management, while Serv team felt isolated from concern from the local authority. Sabine feels this lack of concern particularly as she is on a temporary contract:

*I do not understand. I do not understand that ... We employ many, many contingent workers that they are thrown away ... Finally, after that we are objects, that is clear. And I tell myself we work in social sector so we are here to help people and our boss, I mean the local*

*authority, does not even help his employees for that matter because that's how it is actually. So I have a bit of a problem with that, after that I tell myself anyway it's about politics, so ...' (Sabine).*

### **III- The tension between caring and self-organising**

Individuals at Serv have convivial, cheerful and supportive relationships that they deem necessary for coping with stress that can arise from their mission. However, the difficulty of the mission, in turn, takes much of their time and energy, so they struggle to support each other on an everyday basis. This struggle makes apparent a tension in their ideal to care for each other. Their caring endeavour includes the respect of the colleague's singularities and own choices on the job. However, this endeavour can free people to not care for each other. I first describe how the exercise of freedom leads to conflicts that used to be worked out collectively. Second, I show how this equilibrium is in jeopardy when a new person in the team does not support other people in the team and questions the practice.

#### **Self-organising and conflicts resolution**

The effort to organise as a team is not always easy to sustain and can lead to conflicts. Individuals at Serv want the acceptance of other people, especially as the head of service expressively refuses to make decisions about who is going to attend which meeting. He regularly insists that people take their responsibilities. Vignette 26 below illustrates tensions that arise around the question of who should take the extra work.

#### **Vignette 26**

Excerpt from the notes on video recordings. 'Part-time work and the fairness of workload distribution'

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| Everybody looks down. There is silence. Somebody starts joking on a different topic. So Gilles takes the floor back to insist again on why it is important: 'the maternal assistants are the ones who should enliven it actually' and everybody 'yes, yes, that's true'. Alexia takes the floor to recall the history of why they are stuck there: 'because when we talked about it we weren't all here so you [talking to Gilles] said well it would be good to talk about it when everybody is here' and Gilles: 'yes, well actually we are all here now', and Alexia continues, with a laugh on her face: 'to see who wants to commit herself', laughing because the obvious answer is nobody does. |
|--|

Gilles starts picking people: 'Sabine, you don't feel like it?' and she answers: 'well after that for me it is a matter of time you know'. He accepts that: 'yeah, of course'. She is only working part time.  
So again, everybody looks down. After a few seconds, Alexia, looking at Gilles: 'Well I'm gonna get stuck with it, eh, because frankly, I'm here full-time, I have time', ironically, but not on an aggressive tone. 'So I get stuck with it, but I need a partner'. So Maelle steps up: 'okay I'm gonna get to it with you Alexia.' Maelle works part time as well.

Vignette 26 above illustrates the kind of conflict that can arise from the freedom in organising tasks and the blurriness of work roles. Many people work part-time, and it appears that it is easier to absorb all the meetings when working full time than part-time. People working part-time are in charge of a number of children matching proportionally the amount of time they are working. However they are supposed to attend all the team meetings as well, and have less slots to position them in their schedule. As a result, the social workers that are full time tend to have to back up much more the ones that are part-time. As Vignette 26 above demonstrates, people can feel that the workload is not fairly divided. To deal with this, Serv employees have recurrent conversations about their way functioning as a team. In this particular case, in the afternoon social workers and a psychologist met for the Practice Analysis Group during which they spoke again about this moment, and Maelle expressed the guilt that she feels from working part-time. Alexia says that she still feels she does not want to take charge of the meeting she volunteered for and is a bit angry about it, so others will ask her why she decided to step up. They talk their conflict through. Hence it appears they manage to resolve conflicts and maintain supportive relationships through communicating about their emotions and positions. The distribution of workload is an area of constant renegotiation that can create jealousy and frustration.

### **Free to not care**

Since members of Serv are free to organise their work as they want, they are also free to disengage from the team. In a job that entails being confronted to persons that drift away from the societal norms, Serv employees are particularly tolerant of each other. There are no norms about the right way to work and no shame for not knowing or feeling incompetent. There are no personal judgements on individuals. Some individuals feel less confident in

their work capacities than others but they acknowledge this, so other individuals will try to support them when needed.

Similarly, there is no norm about the way people manage their work hours. Individuals are benevolent about each other in their personal organising as well. For instance, during lunchtime, which is required to be at least forty-five minutes long, some people eat with the team while others eat by themselves in the office or at home. Nobody criticizes others for not following the majority that eats together at lunchtime. However, this works out well because people trust each other for being benevolent.

This respect for individual freedom is put at risk when someone's individual freedom is to not care about others at work. When Raphaëlle arrives in the team, she implicitly puts into question the norm of caring for each other. Vignette 27 below illustrates this situation.

### **Vignette 27**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'The team value in jeopardy'

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| Laura explains the difficulties in the team by the fact that they have different ways of working, which is necessarily complicated. I reflect that they always had different ways of working and different personalities, but I think that Raphaëlle makes things quite complicated because of her positioning, temper, and personality. She knows better, so she doesn't want to change for the team. Moreover, she is angry and hurt for being treated badly (her judgment) by the institution so she takes it on anything she can: she takes the days off she wants regardless of anything else, she does the meetings that suits her organisation, she has the working hours that suit her personal organisation. For instance, on the way back Gilles tells me that he had to have a conversation with her because she arrived systematically at 9.30 for meetings starting at 9 which was not very nice for the other people who made an effort to be there by 9, plus she could not be included in the roundtable that starts every meeting to set up the agenda. |
|--|

Raphaëlle puts into question the team as a value. In her behaviour, she shows that she does not recognise the needs of other people but only hers and the needs of the children she takes care of. This becomes a problem for other people but forcing her to behave differently would betray their norm of respecting each other's freedom in organising. Raphaëlle takes advantage of their endeavor for self-organising, but she does not embrace the value of care for each other that was balancing the self-organising.

## **Chapter summary**

This chapter aimed to report on the way relationships at work were shaped at Serv. The first section highlighted three features of Serv workplace on which people built to elaborate their relationships: authenticity, coordinating in autonomy, and taking care of children in pain. At Serv, there was a sense of authenticity that came from the impression that life and people were not different within work from outside work. The authenticity could be seen in the simplicity of appearances, like clothing and room layouts, and in the attention to practical matters, like undermining of the bureaucratic form, and also in the consideration of Serv workers as persons and not only as workers. Moreover, the everyday interactions were also shaped by the need to collaborate and coordinate diaries for various meetings and visits. The analysis unveiled the dialectics between the autonomy of individuals in the team and the dependence on the team to accomplish the mission of fostering children in custody. Lastly, the central feature of Serv workplace was the struggle to improve the situation of the children they took care of. Serv's mission encompassed diagnosing children's needs, elaborating on measures to take to enhance their development, and implementing these measures. However, Serv employees often felt powerless to accomplish this mission regarding the complexity of the child situation and their limited resources. As they felt responsible for these children, they felt distressed by their difficulty in fulfilling their responsibilities.

The second section of the chapter exposes the relationships at Serv and how they relate to the authenticity, coordination and difficulties of the mission unveiled in the first section. Because of the authenticity and the multiplicity of interaction for coordination, people enjoy working together. They have considerate and cheerful interactions. Humour is an important feature of these interactions as a way to bond with each other and also cope with the harshness of each child's situation. Finally, employees at Serv strive to sustain supportive relationships in order to help to make sense of situations, elaborate solutions, and implement the measures.

The third section highlights how individuals at Serv have limits to the support they provide to each other. The analysis unveils tensions between self-organising and caring for each other. While self-organising is typically

associated with interdependencies that lead people to work-out conflicts from questions related to task allocations or compatibilities of working hours, this equilibrium is fragile. Hence, individuals at Serv do not always manage to sustain their ideal of care in relationships.

# CHAPTER 6- The construction of ethical issues at work: the case of relationships at Comms and at Serv

## Introduction

In the two previous chapters, I presented an account of how the organisational norms, culture and practices shaped the relationships in the workplace. The focus of the analysis was the quality of relationships. This third chapter of findings adopts a cognitive lens of the phenomenon and focuses on the construction of the ethical issue. The dependent variable is the ethical issue of the 'good' way to relate to people at work. In this chapter, the research question is: how people make sense of the 'good' way to behave with each other in the workplace?

Making sense is a cognitive concept. It means understanding, thinking, comprehending reality (Starbuck and Milliken, 1988). The outcome of making sense is the conscious reflecting of the issue. However, not all the routes taken by the mind to result in a reflective understanding of an issue belong to individual, reflective reasoning. Some of these routes represent affective and social factors that go beyond the realm of awareness (Dane and Pratt, 2007; de Klerk, 2017).

The research settings chosen for this project are particularly suitable to study this phenomenon since they offer various degrees of construction of the ethical issue. Some individuals, mostly at Serv, recognise an ethical issue that pertains to conflicting responsibilities between caring for the work and caring for the other person at work. Other individuals, mostly at Comms, do not experience a moral tension between these two caring responsibilities. In this latter case, I observe the rationalisation of emerging tensions. Rationalising is restoring the consistency between one's actions and one's mental model (Festinger, 1957). When individuals raise awareness to the ethical issue of care, traces of the rationalisation process can be found in the discourse. This chapter offers to unpack the process leading to the construction of the ethical issue of care allocation.

The epistemological stance adopted here is of theory building and not of hypothesis testing (see Chapter 3 on methodological and epistemological approaches of this research). However, Sonenshein's model (2007) guides the focus of analysis. The sensemaking-intuitionist model provides the analytical framework that geared the data collection design and the data analysis process. There are two sets of theorisation that constitute the model: first, the overall structure - issue construction, followed by intuitive judgment and explanation and justification – and second, the individual and collective factors that influence the process all along. In the inductive process of analysis, the theoretical contribution appeared to situate at the issue construction phase. Since I adopted a process view (Tsoukas and Chia, 2002; Hernes, 2014), I considered the individual and collective factors as integral to the process rather than external elements influencing it.

In this chapter, I first present findings regarding the elements constitutive of the process of the construction of the ethical issue of care and how they connect to each other. Then I discuss whether and how these findings can inform the temporal question of stability and evolution of the ethical issue of care over time.

## **I-The construction of the ethical issue**

Three elements appear necessary to lead to either recognition or non-recognition of the ethical issue of care – or said differently to ethical awareness or ethical unawareness. These three elements are the need for performance, the happy-productive worker thesis, and the salience of the personal life at work.

### **Need for performance: Work as the function of the relationship**

Findings indicate that the issue of the good way to behave with each other in the workplace is primarily framed by the purpose of performing work. The need for performance is salient. At Comms, people understand that they have pressure to satisfy the clients and to appear brilliant and successful, both individually and collectively (see Chapter 4 for the complete analysis). At Serv, people feel pressure from the responsibility of alleviating children's pain and

allowing them a brighter future than the one that is looming upon them (see Chapter 5 for the complete analysis). The salience of the need for performance is constituted by numerous cues that people notice and use to construct the issue of the good way to behave with each other at work. When asked about the good way to behave with each other at work, individuals anchor their answer on the work objectives. Hence, the question they first answer is 'how to function well at work'. Answers include either qualities of relationships, followed by the explanation of why these qualities are functional in the work context, or directly the functional qualities of work relationships.

When people first frame their answer in terms of qualities of relationships, they evoke elements such as respect, politeness, trust, empathy, positivity, cheerfulness. They link these elements with functions such as feeling at ease to work with each other, making people feel they are part of the team, and they can contribute, allowing information to circulate, collaborating efficiently, being available to work with others. The quotes from interviews below illustrate the connections made between the quality of the relationship and its function. Pierre explains that the good attitude is to be available and in a good mood and he supports his answer by the productivity rationale ('to work well'):

*'Otherwise the good attitude I think is to appear available, in a good mood...then after if one can be proactive it's good but it's not always easy because we are... our time is in general already sold at 150% it is not always easy on top of that to be proactive but we should, in theory we should be. Well... what else? I don't know, it is talking to each other, communicating, I think that... Yeah availability and good mood, that's... that's super important to work well.'* (Pierre, Comms).

Bjorn criticises the manager in the scenario 1 who does not take the time to enquire about how people are when he arrives in the morning (see Appendix A) because Bjorn thinks that this manager's behaviour is 'cold' and as a result, is not productive:

*'For a manager to behave like that with his teams, it is very cold and very distant. After that ... Yes, we're not in a social centre either, so that's why I did not mark one either. So about people sometimes you*

*need, very sadly, to know how to move on, but there I do not think that ... Asking how it goes or paying attention to others necessarily hampers productivity, on the contrary actually ... You see, a team that has found their feet is a more productive team and a solid team is a better team so ... that's why.'* (Bjorn, Comms)

Effie explains that the good way to behave with each other is to be 'sociable'. She pursues her line of reasoning by explaining that being nice to people allows to motivate them for work.

*'Within the agency ... Frankly I would say it is to be sociable, to be understandable with people. It's not because ... Well, if you speak to me badly, I would be less willing to do your thing and I will do it more ... Especially ... Finally worse because here I am edgy or ... or I don't know you see it ... You destabilise people. And I do not think you have to be mean to ... Be heard, you know what I mean?'* (Effie, Comms)

Sometimes people directly answer that the appropriate way to behave with each other is to be collaborative, helping, efficient, available, in other words, to be functional. A number of people, especially at Comms, add that one has to be professional, which means focusing on the work and keeping emotional distance with each other. The first thing that comes to Fanny's mind about the good way to behave with each other is to serve organisational goals:

*'The good behaviour? It's...It's extremely broad, it's...it's knowing how to stay professional. Then it is telling oneself that...we are not here to build friendships, that...we are here to serve a common goal'* (Fanny, Comms).

When Odile explains the kind of relationships that are suitable in the workplace, she emphasises that relationships should not be personal otherwise people lose the objectivity that is necessary to accomplish quality work:

*'And in addition when one enters into a very personal relationship with people I find that after that then it distorts a little bit the relationship ... It can distort a little bit the relationships, the work relationships. So there are people we're going to be ... So, we're going to be more involved emotionally, closer, more ... there it is, there are*

*others where it will not be this way and as a result, we don't have necessarily the same objectivity about people .' (Odile, Comms)*

These quotes above highlight the need to stay professional, to have emotional distance with each other. While there was no direct question about how close one has to be with each other at work, interestingly people mention it in their answer about the good way to behave with each other. This spontaneous mention shows the latent need to care about people at work, and not only about the work itself.

*Contestation of the main framework: the need to care about people*

Most of the cues that lead to the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work pertain to work objectives. However, the other person raises rival attention. This rival attention evidences in expressions of interest in the other person, and also sometimes more directly as a moral obligation. Alexia states that colleagues are part of her life, hence it is important to see how they are doing:

*'I think that we actually spend a lot of time at work, the hours we do at Serv take a good part of our lives, that's huge we're there all the time and I think it's important ... I think it's important anyhow to see how the colleagues are doing.'(Alexia, Serv)*

Maelle expresses the duty she feels to check on her colleagues and provide help if needed. She emphasises this duty as a human being, as opposed to robots.

*'I do feel the duty to ask the other what is going on ... and then well to see how I can help her and so, I think we are not... we are not robots' (Maelle, Serv)*

Natacha talks about the role of the conscience when she explains how to behave with each other at work:

*'Somebody who asks herself the question, after some time she will do it because she...she has a conscience well, she has not yet been... perverted by the system, completely [laughing], she has a conscience.' (Natacha, Comms)*

Natacha stresses that the 'system' leads to only care about the work but there is a need to care about the workers as well. Marie-Claire expresses the competing attention between caring for the work or caring for the worker.

*'This is my feeling, so then my feeling is that even if one has a position of responsibility that does not prevent from having some... interest for the person and not only for the work produced.'* (Marie-Claire, Serv)

Marie-Claire's quote above highlights how the responsibility does not only rests on the work produced, but extends to the person. Hence, caring about people at work is positioned as competing with the main function of work relationships - performing work. In particular the mental strain experienced at work has been found critical in orienting attention towards the work or towards the person.

#### *Mental strain, emotions and ethical awareness*

Mental strain, or stress, results from high demand of the job and low latitude for action on it (Karasek, 1979). Regarding its role in the construction of the issue of how to behave with each other at work mental strain is a double-edged sword. One effect of mental strain is that it consumes cognitive and temporal resources and thus gears attention toward resolving work problems, driving attention away from care for co-workers. The negative feelings from not performing well constitute a sharp reminder of the necessity to perform and increases the salience of the need to perform. Alexia expresses the difficulty of the job for her and how it triggers negative feelings of responsibility for failure:

*'This job is complicated, that's true that this jobs at [Serv] is difficult because we carry plenty of things plus you are referent of a situation then you're necessarily responsible when it goes to shit.'* (Alexia, Serv)

Pierre expresses the pressure he feels on the job and how he tries to manage it:

*'It is the client's pressure, the pressure that we... yes the client's pressure because we are...we are still service providers and we... our mission is to provide something qualitative in timing. It brings... it*

*brings pressure. Now in general we manage, if the brief is very clear, if the expectations of the client are very well understood, in general already it... it allows to limit the pressure and if we have enough time to do it, it allows to limit pressure.'* (Pierre, Comms)

The urgency that people feel to perform work appears in the quotes above. As a result, there is little cognitive space for thinking about colleagues.

However, mental strain can also arise from noticing people's pain and thus gear attention towards the need to care for each other. This noticing can also apply to oneself. For instance, Natacha remembers being unwell in the workplace. She would have liked support from colleagues and conclude that they have to acknowledge the 'human' side at work:

*'You should not forget to look at the people with whom you work with then. Because ... Even though there are ... Actually personal problems can come from ... from the professional sphere. When things are not going well because a client told us off, it happens very often, to me it happened once to end up in the toilet crying, well I'm sorry then but I would have liked it that some colleagues realise it and ... You see, cheer me up and so on. We cannot disconnect the human from the professional sphere. There it is.'* (Natacha, Comms)

Arousals of negative emotions influence the mental model indirectly as well: through triggering supportive behaviours. Stress leads people to need help and seeking support from others. In addition, when people identify that others are in pain from stress, they tend to provide support, either by comforting the person psychologically or by providing help on the job. These supporting behaviours, especially if repeated, might change the mental model, so as to draw a cognitive representation that is consistent with their actions. Sabine has experienced support from a particular support group (Practice Analysis Group) which allowed her to express her mental strain from work. Receiving this support makes her reflect on the workers' needs for care:

*'Well, that's for this as well that we have Practice Analysis Groups that are still ... As much in section [prevention social work] I ... Well I saw no interest in this, as much here ... Yeah one tells oneself we're lucky that ... that there is that. Because therefore we get an outside*

*view from the psychologist, and also the support from colleagues who can say well there I went through this too, don't worry, you are not ... There you go, you are ... You experience issues, that's normal ... because it is true that we always tend to put ourselves into question and then to tell ourselves but I may not be made for that then... And then finally no, we realise that we are simply human and then that we do feel our emotions, there we are...'* (Sabine, Serv).

Noticing issues of mental strain leads to realising that respect and conviviality might not suffice to cope with work issues. When mental strain issues are not raised, enhancing well-being at work is cast under a casual light such as being polite, cheerful, respectful, a level of relationships involvement that everybody agrees on. Mental strain raises the question of suffering at work – for work reasons – and consequently triggers the question of caring for each other. When people experience stress and anxiety, or even depression, the appropriate response necessitates a higher degree of involvement that resembles care. This higher degree of involvement requires more resources and can clash with work objectives. People express that they cannot spend too much time taking care of colleagues:

*'We have our children monitoring, we have our situations and effectively one can be overwhelmed and as a result it is not easy to hold out a hand to the other colleague'* (Alexia, Serv).

Work and supporting co-workers compete in resources such as time and personal energy. Raphaëlle stresses how the energy that one devotes to helping a colleague competes with the energy that one spends performing one's tasks:

*'That's if there's something ... Where there we say ... ffff, there he or she does not look good but I cannot then. If on top of that I go there I will not ... I will not get there. I'm tired, I don't feel... So that means that ... And then there are days we'll feel it more than others, to go to support, to go to meet ... To ... Everything depends as we manage. But ...That's it.'* (Raphaëlle, Serv)

Taking care of people competes with taking care of the work also because taking care of colleagues is not necessarily suitable at work. Odile

explains that taking care of colleagues changes the relationship and hampers objectivity:

*'And ... And I've often ... I've always struggled to find the limit precisely between when I feel someone is not well, talking to him about it, trying to help him, and at the same time I'm not a shrink, I'm not a coach, I'm not ... There, and ... And staying in the professional setting. And in addition when one enters into a very personal relationship with people, I find that afterwards it distorts a little bit the relationship ... It can distort a little the work relationships. So there are people we're going to be ... So, we're going to be more involved emotionally, closer, more ... that's it, there are others for whom it will not be the case and so we have not necessarily the same objectivity on people anymore.'* (Odile, Comms)

When conflicting responsibilities are recognised, an efficient way to dissipate the tension is to see them as compatible, or even in a symbiotic relationship. The symbiotic relationship between the interest of the persons and the interest of the work production is accomplished through the construction of the happy-productive worker thesis.

### **The happy-productive worker thesis**

The happy-productive worker thesis (Wright and Staw, 1999) offers an interesting resolution of the ethical dilemma that arises between caring for a co-worker and caring for the work. The idea is that happier people work better. Hence, the objective of performing at work and the objective of caring for people at work are complementary.

I showed that many individuals stress that taking care of each other is not possible at work. These individuals show two different rationales for this impossibility to take care of colleagues appear. In one approach, mostly observed at Serv, people express regrets for the impossibility to take care of colleagues. The need to care for others within the objectives of work performance creates a mental model containing an ethical issue, and a moral tension is felt (see the centre of Figure 2). For most individuals at Serv, there is a conflict of responsibilities. In another approach, mostly observed at Comms,

individuals do not express regret or dilemma, or hesitation, rather affirm the moral impetus to perform at work. In this latter case, the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work has only one clear and unequivocal function: the need to perform. In this case, the empathetic emotion felt in front of people suffering is rationalised into the happy-productive worker thesis. This allows for not raising caring for co-workers as an ethical issue. The issue of caring for co-workers is absorbed within the work ethics. Caring for co-workers serves productive objectives.

The care for the person becomes a derivative of the care for the work. From caring about the work, people identify the problems of not being well as a potential disruption of the work. This leads to asserting the happy-productive worker thesis as truth. Aurélie exemplifies this line of reasoning:

*'I think if you are not well at work, the effects will be felt on the productivity at work' (Aurélie, Comms)*

When legitimising the imperative to care for the other, almost all individuals at Comms express the logic of the happy-productive-worker. They translate this belief on numerous topics, such as getting along well within the team so as to be more efficient. For instance, Anne explains that being well allows learning faster:

*'Not having employees frustrated is super important. Well for me it's a productivity factor, just like someone's skills, someone who is happy in his work, and who manages to talk well with his colleagues, to show that he can do things without feeling threatened and everything, therefore he can learn faster, it's very important.'* (Anne, Comms)

Joséphine uses this logic as well when she explains that bullying people is not the good thing to do because the team will work less well:

*'But actually so when I had seen it ended up around me at burst of tears, or this type of things, I think this is not the good solution to get a team to work well and... That's it.'* (Joséphine, Comms)

This latter example shows how much the productive objectives can orient the ethical thinking. Bullying people, behaving in a way that will make them cry could be critiqued on moral grounds. However, Joséphine does not

apply a moral lens to her statement of not making people cry, but a productive one. The happy-productive worker thesis allows applying a business frame to the issue of the good way to behave with people at work.

In the face of the empathic emotions of seeing others struggle, individuals recognise that people are suffering. However, they recognise also that work objectives hamper the possibility to take care of co-workers. From there, two paths are possible: either individuals identify this conflict as an ethical issue or they rationalise the conflict in the idea that both are compatible.

This rationalisation can be complete or partial. For instance, Christine uses the happy-productive worker thesis to justify supporting a colleague, but at the same time she laughs about it because it seems odd to her:

*'If in a team at some time there is one person that works less, that works less well, at last we come back down to the situation where she is overwhelmed by personal issues that make her less efficient, then we have to accept, knowing that she is not like that all the time and that... the quicker we will be holding her, supporting her, maybe the better she will get. [...] Then as a result it seems to me... [laugh] that it is a pretty good investment!' (Christine, Serv).*

This oddness is the expression of 'cracks' in the happy-productive worker thesis. Maelle's interview provides an example of these cracks. She is tempted to rationalise her feeling that she needs to care for colleagues into the happy-productive worker thesis, but she also realises that the reasoning does not hold and that she has the moral need to care for colleagues in need, independently of her moral imperative to perform her work:

*Maelle (Serv): That's like that then I say that's my answer somewhat spontaneously...*

*Me: Mmm.*

*Maelle (Serv): That his reaction is appropriate [reacting to Sophie's scenario] and then that when you are at work there is...it is not the place to discharge your problems and all. After that if I put myself back in my working context I know that... It can happen that I exchange with the colleagues about situations sometimes complex*

*from our private lives. So... So I think maybe it's linked to the fact that our team is a small team where we have trustful relationships and where on top of that we work on human beings and if we go through complicated things in our own family life, our private life, I think that ... We need to discharge. It is not the right place because, well, there are other places to go to pour out our personal problems, but it can hinder our work. So as a result maybe sometimes only five minutes in the morning if the colleague looks shattered because she has just encountered a somewhat complicated situation with her child at any rate etcaetera. Or an argument with her husband whatever, if she needs to pour it out I will listen to her. Because, well because maybe it will allow her to spend a better day and that maybe she will be more efficient at work so I struggle to have a definite attitude. To say that yes it is the work so we have no space at all to exchange around our private lives. At the same time, here I just mentioned an example of a situation where I would listen to my colleague if I see her arriving in the morning not looking well and when I ask her a question if she answers me, I will not say I have plenty of... I have plenty of syntheses or whatever, I will take the time.)*

Me: OK

Maelle (Serv): *Especiallly in our work with human beings, I think that... yes it's...*

Me: Why?

Maelle (Serv): *Well... Well, because if we are ourselves polluted by our complicated personal situations... I will give you an expression that I heard in training session and that I find quite telling: if our pipes are blocked [laughs] it's not very pretty, a psychologist used this, if our pipes are unblocked that is if we are free inside, if we have been able to drain away all that is complicated inside us, as a result the person in front of us will feel comfortable and will also be able in turn, the person in our work, the person who is being received, a parent, a child, this person will also be able to talk freely about his or her problems, about what he or she is feeling, is living. Whereas if we are entangled in complicated situations, if we haven't been able to free*

ourselves from them, I think that as a consequence our listening is of less good quality. So maybe we can also be helpful to colleagues but it is in one-time, brief situations, that's it, after that if it gets out of proportions we will orient the colleague towards... Yes towards a therapist or someone else. But you see I'm reacting to that because I have lived here then at work but not here with the Serv team, with a person who was outside, who was working in the [Prevention team], who was dealing with a grief, the death of her husband, and therefore... yeah who went through a period of depression after the death and then who came to work really there with the package on her back and who could not take things into consideration, who was pouring out like that naturally without being asked, she came to us, she sat down and then she spoke, she spoke, she spoke... There you go, about what she has experienced that is super hard, that she cannot cope with it. And several times she came in front of me at the office, I did not say, she was called... Blanche, I did not say, well I have work to do, I have work to do, I can't listen to you. I was able to tell her but after perhaps half an hour or forty-five minutes of listening to her on her personal life, perhaps it would be important that you could see a professional, there that you could confide in somebody else but I could not close the door bluntly by saying there... 'This is not the right place'. I could not position myself like that.

Me: Yeah, it's not easy.

Maelle (Serv): Nope. Well no, it was... Yeah, there was something inhumane. Come on I had known her for ten years, I've been working here for ten years, I meet her every morning so obviously we are in the framework of work and everything but... But it was not possible for me then I thought that ... Yeah, well I felt... I would not even say I had to, because then, then I felt like I was... I was helping for her at that time, she needed to talk hence I was available for her, so I listened to her naturally. It's funny [laughs] because when I talk to you I tell myself my first answer like that, spontaneously, is that the attitude of... I don't remember there, Sophie, is completely suited and when I give you examples I feel like... It would be somewhat different.'

The happy-productive worker thesis enhances the work ethics rather than the issue of the good way to behave with each other at work. In Maelle's interview above the **issue of the duty to care for people at work** appears in her discourse. However, **she also highlights the constraints** on the capacity to care for each other at work. She attempts to use **the happy-productive worker thesis to resolve the tension** but when she utters it she realises that it does not make sense and is left with her questions.

Maelle's struggle to make sense of the issue is fueled by the question of the precedence of personal life over professional life. When she considers the importance of the personal life, she raises the ethical issue of care for the work versus care for the co-workers. The presence of the personal life at work emerges as a critical feature of the workplace in the process of raising the ethical issue of care.

### **The salience of personal life at work**

How the personal life of individuals is disclosed in the workplace appears to play a significant role in the process of making sense of the good way to behave with each other at work. The salience of people's personal lives and especially their personal issues trumps the need to care for people. When personal issues are concealed the way is paved for the sole concern for work objectives.

The modern workplace segments work and non-work domains (Fleming and Spicer, 2004). As a result, people in work organisations can be considered as workers only rather than whole people (George and Dane, 2011). However, I find that the salience of personal life allows individuals seeing people as whole persons. Raphael explains that the copywriters in his team are on temporary contracts and considers the impact on their lives. As a result, he expresses empathetic emotions towards them:

*“There today one can have done any job before, it is almost always a temporary contract [CDD], and one must make at least two before having a permanent contract [CDI]. And I find that it creates some ... Pressure and some ... It is quite difficult. Well I see my copywriter interns aspiring employees, I would not like to be in their shoes so that's why I think you have to be hyper ... Mindful of ... Because it's ...*

*they are fates, individuals, colleagues ... they need to know whether they will be able to eat, whether they will be able to pay their apartment and their housing to be able to work well simply ... So ... here ... Temporary contracts [CDD] that's awful. Sometimes it's justified eh, I do not say that but ...' (Raphael, Comms)*

Raphael mentions the personal situations of people who are on temporary contracts. This mention of precarious contracts leads him to think about the effects on their personal lives and finally to devise on the necessity to be attentive to people's need. The personal aspects are cues in the mental model and trigger the need for care. The tension with the work objectives arises consequently. Mentioning personal lives of people leads to raising the distinction between what is justified for work purpose and what is good for people. Furthermore, mention of personal lives leads to stress that the focus on work prevents from allocating attention to people. Alexia does not ask people how they are doing in their personal life and relates it to time allocated to work task:

*'Here at Serv I see, you see for instance Maelle, sometimes she says well I don't even have time to talk to you about my children, she loves talking about her children, sometimes indeed we run all over the place and we don't have time to exchange, we don't really know how this one is doing, how this other one is doing in her personal life and I find it now it is lacking.'*(Alexia, Serv)

Moreover, the salience of personal aspects emerges precisely from the representation of the worker as a whole person. Since individuals see each other in their entirety, they look for cues related to the personal life. The perception of the personal issues results from a mental model that considers the person as a whole. Marie-Claire expresses the belief that workers are whole persons:

*'I am a person and I can't split myself...well when I am at work I carry who I am and with my story' (Marie-Claire, Serv)*

This vision of the worker as a whole person was shared at Serv. Maelle underlines that '*we are not robots*' to justify her moral feeling to help her co-workers. The experience of social work might enhance the representation of

co-workers as whole human beings. The social work is by nature demanding in personal resources and requires reflexivity towards one's emotions. Amandine expresses the empathetic emotion that 'seises' her:

*'A placement of a little one where it is very difficult in the separation with the parents, yeah it also seises because we are human above all and ... And sometimes it's not easy so we also make do with our emotions but ... After that it is interesting in the work being carried out and in the evolution that can be seen' (Amandine, Serv)*

At Comms, the worker is mainly regarded as a worker only (see chapter 4 for complete analysis) and individuals do not express regret for not taking into account the personal lives of people. On the contrary, they express how relationships ought to be 'not too personal' because of the risk of conflict of interest with work objectives. Sixtine's quote below illustrates the belief that being professional entails having some distance and separating personal and professional interests:

*'I think there should be some form of distance, of professionalism, that there might be a possible danger as to enter in relationships that are too... too personal because it is going to create lots of emotions in one sense or another depending on the moment, on the situations, etc. Professional interests can't always match personal interests, therefore some form of distance I think is a good regulator and seems to me appropriate in the work setting' (Sixtine, Comms)*

Hence, the nondisclosure of the personal life is the result of the representation of the issue. In Sixtine's quote above, it is clear that limiting attention to personal aspects is a strategy to not raise tensions between the interests of people and the interest of work. When the mental model contends that the performance of the work is primary, people consciously limit the disclosure of their 'humanity', as opposed to 'professionalism', so as to avoid conflict of interest.

In Sixtine quote above, an underlying professional-personal dichotomy allows emphasising how professional and personal should be completely separated. I find that this dimension is pervasive in the representation of the good way to behave with each other at work. The separation between the

personal and the professional appears an important value that supports the view of the work as the sole function of work relationships. The quotes below illustrate how this dichotomy is expressed. For instance, Alexia explains that she sees two sides in scenario 1 (see Appendix A), a professional one and a human one:

*'Because I would say that there is the professional side and there is the human side that emerges I find in this text ' (Alexia, Serv)*

The dichotomy between personal and professional underlies Amandine discourse as well. She explains that lunchtime allows bonding on other sides than the professional side:

*'Amandine (Serv): If I am ... every lunchtime of weekdays in Mouflins, I keep at least one or two times a week. ... Here also find it important to ... to have exchanges like this ... Outside.*

*Me: Why?*

*'Amandine (Serv): Well it cuts off from work and then ... Here it allows to be ... to have another bond than always be on the professional side'*

Bjorn provides an interesting example of the personal-professional dichotomy as well. He explains that there are emotions in work relationships but they are to be worked out because it is not the 'personal privacy zone':

*'After that there's a difference between ... You see it's not the ... It's not what you might call real life, it's not your ... your personal privacy zone, then you're not forced to go tell all your life either or become friends with each of your ... colleagues, well it is not a requirement either but it does not prevent to be a human being and after that as in life there are people that you like, there are people that you like less, ok the ones that you do not like it does not mean... it does not mean either that you have to go straightforward against them, you keep to yourself, you compromise and you keep working with them. And if it's hypersensitive, then you make sure ... not to have to see them anymore for ... switching projects or I don't know what.' (Bjorn, Comms)*

Finally, a longer quote from Alexia's interview illustrates how the presence of the personal life, and the possibility to express pain, plays a role in the construction of the ethical issue:

*'Alexia (Serv): For me there were evenings when ... Yeah, hellish day with a placement, super heavy emotions, a tough hearing, sometimes we got shouted at by the Children's Judge and take in right in the face, it happens and so 'wow' it is ... Then between the Children's Judge who gives us grief, who will have send it full on the head, a partner as just earlier a psychologist who gets annoyed who gets offended with a thing that we... here, that tells us we're being abusive while we work in the ... We protect from abuse, come on, it is bloody hard to hear that we are abusive I find. And then, there it is, with all such emotions there are times a full day and at six o'clock we find ourselves here all alone nobody's left, yeah that's hard, yeah. Well, somewhat heavier to leave like that. And it happened not so long ago, an evening at 6 o'clock we were all ready to leave and Maelle arrived, she had just settled a placement for two little cuties, two little boys who ... Maelle she has two little boys so it mirrored something difficult for her these two little cuties who were about the same age as hers and when she arrived, 'The placement went well?', we were really on our way to leave, 'Alright? The placement went well, all that?' And Maelle she collapsed. That it has been really hard, she needed to cry, she needed to let go and well, we all put our handbags, our jackets and let's go we take a moment, "if you want we can even go get a drink", in the end we did not go but we stayed here. We sat down in Laura and I's office, and Laura was there, I don't remember who, and really we sat down and we talked about the placement, about how it happened, how she had managed things, we comforted her that she had done things well ... That ... she was very disturbed to have done this in an emergency and so we have been able to reassure her on the fact "wait a minute that is not on you, it was a decision taken like that to work that out in the emergency but you did what you could, you reassured them, you said to them well it is very good and so", and then she left really... she seemed to leave relieved at any rate but we talked about it again and*

*she was much more relieved when she returned home. Otherwise as she had told us, she would have poured out everything on her husband and it's complicated for someone who is not at all in that job to understand ... there. So then yeah I think yes if we do not have these moments it's difficult.*

Me: You are more attentive to people who are more sensitive than others?

Alexia (Serv): *Well, of course, a colleague who comes in and then bursts into tears, yes in this instance ... I think that if she had told us "yes yes it's fine, all went well" all this, had she not shown this sensitivity at that time we might have all gone, I mean it was six o'clock. That's it.*

Me: Mmm.

Alexia (Serv): *On her, she knew to have us know that she was not well and so we were able to stop then, so I thought that was good. It is important to tell each other... After that for me it is on a daily basis, there are times when if it is too hard I discharge myself on my colleague eh, on Laura. I tell her, then sometimes she is not necessarily, well it's not necessarily the right time for her I mean ... one has to be ... I may not necessarily come up at a good time because well she is in the middle of something or she is about to leave or she is in ... There you go, she is in her job and she has no time to stop for that but if, if it really is a time when she has no time usually she talks to be about it later. If it is one hour later or at the end of the day or the next day if we did not see each other again, she would say hey yesterday you were not so well about that so then ... and so we unpack the problem in a way together ... that's it.'*

Alexia explains the **mental strain** that she feels at work, and that peaks on certain days. From this personal experience, she bases her assessment that **she needs support** from her colleagues. She **recognises that her colleagues might need her to care for them** in the same way. She recalls an event when Maelle was suffering from a difficult work situation, and they cared for her by allowing her to express that she felt terrible and by spending some time to support her. Moreover, **her knowledge of Maelle's**

**personal situation plays an important role** in her assessment of Maelle's need for care. Alexia understands that Maelle is suffering because of her personal role as a mother. She also acknowledges that she needs to feel better to foster her relationships with her children and husband. This act of care reinforces Alexia's mental model of **the need to care for colleagues**. As they have done it, it evidences that it can be done. Importantly, she stresses the role of Maelle's **willingness to display her pain**. If Maelle had not displayed her pain, her colleagues would not have been able to care for her. Norms of concealing suffering can hinder the capacity to care for each other.

However, she acknowledges that supporting colleagues is difficult **as it comes in the way of work tasks** or of one's personal life. She sees the constraints of the work as preventing the workers from giving attention to each other. As a result, **she raises the issue of conflicting duties: towards the work and towards the colleagues**.

I have unpacked the content of the process leading to the awareness or the unawareness of the ethical issue of caring for people at work. I turn now to discuss findings about the temporality of the process.

## **II-The temporal structure of the process**

The construction of the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work has several temporal dimensions. The previous section has shown that the mental model is dynamic. The core structure has stability, but the way it emerges is shaped by the situation of interaction. Individuals construct a discourse in the interaction. The dynamism is evidenced by the exposition of the cues on which individuals construct their discourse on the issue. I have shown that there is a primary function of relationships – work – and it can be challenged by the need to care. These other needs are transitional at first but can then settle in the mental model. The dynamism of the construction of the mental model also rests on the interplay between cognitions and actions. Actions reflect the cognitions in the mental model. However, actions are also constrained by the situation, and thus do not reflect exactly the representation. Hence, individuals' actions become cues for

sensemaking. For example, when support was provided to co-workers the action did not come from a representation of caring for co-workers as a duty at work, but from an empathetic reaction to suffering. The execution of the action triggered the belief that one needs to care for each other at work.

Moreover, I find that the mental representation evolves within a larger time frame, i.e. over years of work experience. In this section, I first take one step back and look at the origins of the mental representation. Second, I outline how the mental model becomes surprisingly stable through rationalising processes.

### **Temporal boundaries of the mental model: origins**

The observations span on several months in the two organisations. However, interviews allow covering a longer time span. Some elements emerge that provide insights about a larger picture. I examine where the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work originates. The interview data allow commenting on two aspects of the origins of the mental representation: the shift when entering the organisation, and the evolution with years of work experience.

#### *The entry: shifting the mental model to fit the new work organisation*

Individuals compare their experience or what they know of other workplaces to evaluate how it is in their current workplace. The mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work does not emerge in a vacuum but is based on existing representations. The interaction during Ella's interview illustrates how people spontaneously rest on past work experience to try to make sense of the good way to behave:

Me: Okay. And ... So how do you find it here in terms of interaction with people, is it rather ...?

Ella (Comms): Uh ... Agencies are always ... There is always one aspect ... One aspect a little more joyful than ... than the other places.

Me: Oh yeah ?

Ella (Comms): I have been working ... I started my career ... I was in architecture first'

The individual's experience of other workplaces is not directly a cue for the good way to behave with each other, but it is a learning aid to interpret cues from what is happening and to react appropriately. This phenomenon is similar to living in a foreign country where one keeps referring to other countries one has been living in so as to try to give meaning to feelings triggered by the experience. A quote from Amandine's interview illustrates how a reaction is triggered because it is different from past experiences:

*'And then it ... Then I told myself "wow they're not kidding" [throat clearing] I was not used to ... To this kind of positioning for the manager in my other internships' (Amandine, Serv)*

Comparing between previous experiences does not happen anymore after some years of experience in the workplace. There is no surprise after some time. Alizée, who has been working at Serv for twenty-five years, has no trigger from her past experiences to question her modes of interaction with her colleagues. However, others' surprises can trigger questioning for her:

*'Léa was telling that she had been surprised when she arrived ... As for me I am not surprised anymore because ... Because it is how I function and then there I have no other points of reference then, but ... actually I like it when new people arrive, she says well we used to greet each other, we kissed on the cheek [la bise] every morning, she says nobody kisses on the cheek, well I say yes, well yes. It does not strike me, but she ... Yeah.'* (Alizee, Serv)

People tend to compare their experience of relationships in their current workplace with past work experiences. They do not expect to apply what was happening in other experiences in their current workplace, but it helps them to corroborate what they feel with the reality. Gilles' quote illustrates that comparing workplaces allows to contrast what is happening and to evaluate whether it is worse or better:

*'I feel that it is very disparate depending on the size of the group. [City] was a big organisation, so twenty ... twenty social workers, three different groups, three ... actually three sub-teams in fact and so with different orientations and ... And people could take care of themselves inside the group.'* (Gilles, Serv)

Individuals are conscious that different workplaces are different and they actively try to understand what is going on when they arrive. For instance, Eliot has been working in the organisation for a few weeks only and explains the process of trying to grasp the good way to do in the new workplace:

*'It really depends on the corporate culture, and that's what I'm starting to notice in ... It depends very much on the corporate culture. The discussions I had when I was in London have nothing to do with the discussions I have here.'* (Eliot, Comms)

Eliot notices how different Comms is compared to his former workplace. He remembers telling himself consciously that he had to forget about his old habits to embrace Comms' practices. This was particularly difficult for him since there were no explicit norms:

*'There's a lot of unspoken things, eh. A lot is unspoken in a company and it's ... The first month in an organisation is always very ... Very uncomfortable because ... We are gradually confronted to all these norms ... To all these traditions, which are not on the Job or internship offer ... and which cannot be formalized or officialised by the chiefs. So that ... It's ... It takes time, you have to ... I think you have to be very sensitive, you have to make a conscious effort to identify these norms, without being overwhelmed by them, without being ... destabilized by the unknown and the uncertainty. Actually that when I arrived here I told myself well ... I noticed from the beginning that it was going to be ... That it was different from [inaudible]. And as a result I told myself from the beginning OK, I'm gonna have to make a clean slate from everything I've learned in London because it's been ... I had finished my internship in London two weeks before, so it was really fresh in my head. And ... We tell ourselves OK I'll have to make a clean slate ...'* (Eliot, Comms)

In the quote above, Eliot unpacks his strategy to fit in when he arrives. He tries to incorporate the new mental model of the good way to behave with each other. However, he has only been there a few weeks and has very little work experience overall. The issue of the good way to behave with each other at work was ambiguous and uncertain for inexperienced people but became

more settled with years of experience.

*From ambiguity to certainty: the role of experience*

More experienced people do not raise the issue consciously anymore. It seems that their mental model is stabilised. Experienced people are definite when they state the good way to behave with each other at work. They have a bounded, settled, mental model of the issue. On the contrary, less experienced people tend to express doubts and questioning in trying to explain their view on the issue.

For instance, less experienced individuals are ambiguous about the right degree of sharing about personal life at work. Enzo and Eliot are both young interns, the former in Public Relations, the latter in Consulting. Enzo hesitates whether he should ask people how they are:

*'That's true that... in everyday life even though it is good to enquire [about people], enquiring too much can become disturbing professionally. But not enquiring at all is a silly thing to do as well, you have still to ask at a minimum, and to create bonds with your colleagues then.'* (Enzo, Comms)

Eliot sees an opposition between professionalism and humanity but does not know how to resolve the opposition.

*'Therefore starting from this analysis, how to reconcile at best the need for professionalism, for rationality and efficacy, and the humanity... the need for considering the humanity and the emotions?'* (Eliot, Comms)

Amongst more experienced workers, the boundary is clear. It is suitable to enhance enjoyable professional relationships that entail sharing some superficial aspects of personal life, but it is not suitable to become friends (see chapter 4 about the unsuitability of friendship at Comms). Hence, the representation of the issue seems to stabilise over years of work experience. A phenomenon of rationalisation appears to play an important role in stabilising the mental model.

### **Stabilising the mental model: the role of rationalisation**

While the construction of the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work is dynamic, the model stabilises over time. The mental model offers a script that individuals stop questioning after some time. Ambiguity and equivocality arise when people notice tensions such as the impossibility to focus on the work and to care for people simultaneously, or when there are cracks in the belief that caring for workers and caring for the work are in symbiosis. This ambiguity triggers a sensemaking process. However, often, no sensemaking process is triggered. Interestingly, the mental model can remain stable whereas it does not always fit with the reality. At Comms, the model seemed particularly stable. The representation of the good way to behave with each other at work was surprisingly similar across different individuals, and the interview situation rarely triggered any doubts. The way that people stated the happy-productive worker thesis unanimously was surprising. Inquiring this surprise, I find that individuals at Comms rationalised (Festinger, 1957) the moral discomfort of not caring about people at work. Individuals seek to have cognitive representations consistent with their actions. Hence, they may rationalise the meaning that they attribute to their actions so as to be consistent with the mental model. The happy-productive worker thesis (Wright and Staw, 1999), i.e. the belief that happier people make more productive workers, plays an important role in rationalising the ethical issue of care for co-workers.

To illustrate this process of rationalising as a defence against anxiety I offer to draw on typical situation observed at Comms: the departure story of Joséphine (see Vignette 28). I have already mentioned this story as an example of the entanglement between instrumentality and degree of closeness in relationships (see Chapter 4). This story also evidences the process of rationalising. The decision that Josephine has to leave is only based on work-related reasons. However, another story is constructed based on the happy-productive worker thesis: Joséphine does not fit to the job, consequently it is better for her to find a new job. The first premise –Josephine does not fit to the job- is triggered by attentiveness to the quality of the work. Concerned about the work, the manager notices that she does not provide the expected quality of work. The manager finds a solution to this issue in not pursuing

Josephine's employment contract. The happy-productive worker thesis allows changing the meaning of the story. Since being well and working well are aligned, and since Joséphine is not working well, she cannot be well. This leads to the second premise: it is better for Joséphine to find a new job. The story rationalises the negative personal consequences for Joséphine such as the loss of her salary or the ostracising of the team she has been working with for the past six months. As a result, no conflict between caring for the work and caring for the worker is raised. The mental model of relationships serving solely work purposes is left unchanged.

### **Vignette 28**

Excerpt from the field notes. 'Why is she leaving again?'

Joséphine is in her late twenties. She has been hired as a communication consultant on a six months contract to cope with the current projects as well as to develop the consulting activity. She joined the Consulting team in March along with Paul who has a similar profile: high education and a few years of experience in other jobs. After a few months Natacha, the manager is very happy with Paul performance but much more sceptical of Joséphine's performance. She has evaluated that Joséphine was very committed to her job but she judged her too serious and is annoyed by her inability to take any initiatives. And the worse being that she tends to panic in the presence of clients, leading her to awkward relations with them. Then it seems obvious to Natacha that Joséphine is not fit for this job and she won't have her employment contract renewed. In an official evaluation meeting in July she warned her of her inabilities, so that she can improve (despite Natacha doubted of her capacity to do so). And in early September they have another meeting where they discuss the evolution perspectives for Joséphine. They agree on a few jobs that could fit her profile in other departments in COMMS but they also know that chances are very slim that any openings would happen so they decide that Joséphine start actively looking for another job elsewhere. Natacha is happy to recommend her.

When asked about why Joséphine is leaving, people in the team (including Natacha and Joséphine herself) explain that she really has more a profile of a planner than of a consultant, implicitly she is better off. But actually Joséphine won't be able to find a job before the end of her contract. However, the line stays on the job not being good for her, and the closer the actual date of her departure the more people tend to think that Joséphine was the one initiating the departure. So that on the day of her actual departure there is no expression of sadness or regret among the members of the team. The following week Paul is confirmed in his job with a permanent position, while François, newly hired, replaces Joséphine on a nine months contract. Later on François will appear to be a problem to Natacha, performing even less well than Joséphine did.

This story was a turning point for unveiling the rationalising process on the mental model of relationships at work. Moreover, many traces of this rationalisation can be found in individuals' discourses. For example, in the excerpt from Effie's interview below it appears that Effie tries to find consistency between her belief that the firm does care about people and the

reality that people are being dismissed. She highlights some inconsistencies but rationalises these inconsistencies by concluding that she might miss some information and implying that good reasons are justifying for people's dismissals.

*'There are individual contexts and then after that I think it also depends on ... You put ... You put your finger perhaps on something somewhat interesting that is on one side it is ... That's it, it's a company that pays attention to people etcetera. And on the other side there ... there is still a small wave of departures then at the moment. We have departures a little ... provoked or people who leave of themselves but there is still a ... A ... A small turnover then. And after that, well, you never really know the experience ... I mean, you don't know what is really going on, why people really leave.'* (Effie, Comms)

Later on, Effie tries to rationalise the ethical issue of caring for the work and caring for the people. She legitimises not caring about people by asserting that it is simply not possible:

*'You can ... I even think it's a survival reflex then, you cannot let yourself be bothered about the problems of one another otherwise you ... You won't make it through then. I think you will not make it through emotionally and you will not make it through ... You do not make it through because it's going to take on your work time so it's going to affect you in two ways actually.'* (Effie, Comms)

Michel uses the same reason of material constraints to justify for letting people go that underperformed because of health conditions:

*'And when the person comes back then... her position is not available anymore, then she comes back well it is complicated to take the same thing back and all, and also at that level it is complicated afterwards for us to find a position and so. And it is also complicated to... well, what we could allow ourselves to do with Kim [who had multiple sclerosis] for example well we can't do with everybody, that is to say having somebody that you accompany again so that she really takes back her confidence in herself, her job and all at a high level, well we*

*can't afford it then...then in the end we ...we let her go.'* (Michel, Comms)

In the mental model of the good way to relate to each other at work the representation of the self may be at stake. What does it say about me? The problem of the representation of one's responsibilities is crucial for identity. For instance, at Comms, individuals tend to report their responsibilities on their managers. Managers are the ones who are responsible for caring for people at work. Displacing the responsibility onto a particular function is a way to rationalise the ethical issue of caring for each other at work:

*'Especially if she is in charge, if she has responsibilities for other people so yeah then even more. I think that once you're a manager, that you're responsible for someone ... you're really responsible for someone I think. I think that... You really have to be conscious that ... That you have an enormous influence in the life of ... the other person there that you ... that you care about. So ... yes, their problems are also a little bit your problem, that's my opinion.'* (Ella, Comms)

### **III-Process of three paths to ethical (un)awareness**

While caring for the other person at work could conflict in practice with performing work, this contradiction does not necessarily raise a moral tension. I find that a moral tension emerges between work as the function of the relationship, and the need to care for people. While the need for performance serves the work purpose as the primary function of work relationships, the salience of the personal life enhances the focus on the need to care for the other person at work. The moral tension felt by the individual might create uneasiness or even anxiety. However, a powerful way to release the moral tension is to rationalise the compatibility between caring for the work and caring for the worker into the happy-productive worker thesis. The idea that happier people make more productive workers allows for aligning these two competing goals. Figure 2 below illustrates the three paths that have been observed, leading either to recognise or not recognise an ethical issue between caring for the work and caring for the worker.

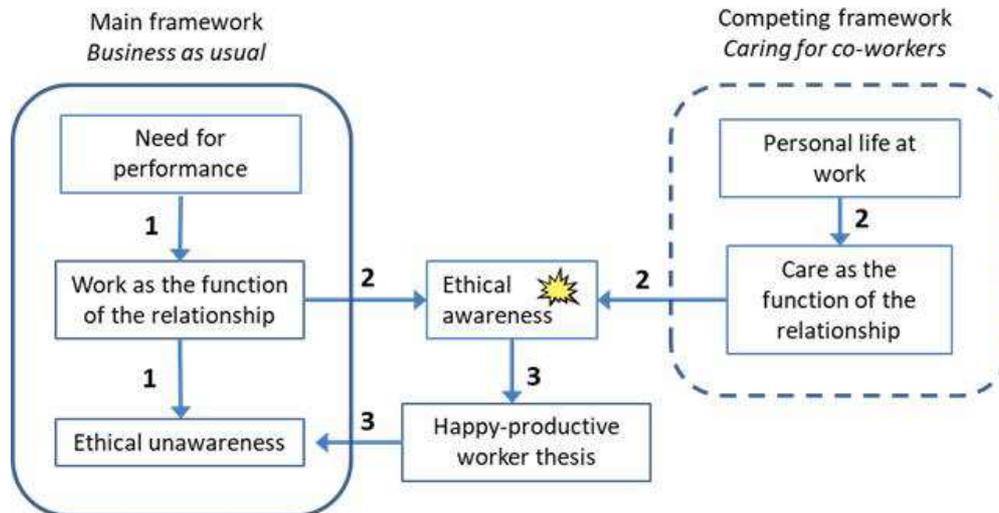


Figure 2: Representation of the process leading to the construction of the ethical issue of caring for work and caring for co-workers

Path 1 stands for 'business-as-usual'. It is triggered by the need to perform one's work that becomes the primary function of the work relationship. On the opposite side Path 2 stands for a competing framework. This framework is activated by the salience of the personal life of co-workers. Awareness to personal life raises a need to care for co-workers. However, Path 2 is also fuelled by the need for performance. These two needs lead individuals raising the ethical issue of competing responsibility between the work and the co-workers, resulting in ethical awareness and feelings of moral tension. Path 2 ends at the ethical awareness and leaves the moral tension intact. Path 3 is activated as a solution to resolve the moral tension and rejoins with the main framework. Path 3 follows the happy-productive worker thesis that allows realigning the competing responsibilities, dissolving the moral tension and reaching back the state of ethical unawareness. I find that Path 3 is activated when the need for performance trumps the need to care for other people at work. In this situation, employees behave in a way to use people instrumentally to achieve organisational ends and feel compelled to do so, notably because of their work ethic and because of their concern for their career. As a result of the moral tension, individuals experience anxiety and distress. As they feel there is no way out of prioritizing work over people, they use the rationalisation path so as to dissipate the moral tension. The rationalisation intervenes at a non-reflexive level so it is possible that when the

organisation promotes individual reflexivity over one's job, as it is the case at Serv, individuals are less likely to follow Path 3. Moreover, possibly the norm of expressing constantly positive emotions that was observed at Comms also enhances the need for rationalising negative emotions.

## **Chapter summary**

From analysing the reactions, explanations, and assumptions in the discourses of members of Comms and Serv, this chapter unveiled the process of construction of the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work.

The productive function of work relationships constitutes a platform from which individuals make sense of the good way to behave with each other. An alternative focus of the relationship could emerge if interests and needs of the other persons were considered. When this alternative focus emerged, individuals raised the ethical issues of conflicting responsibilities between the work and the other persons at work. The alternative focus was activated when the personal life – as opposed to the professional life- became salient. The saliency of the personal life was enhanced when personal issues and people's suffering was encountered. The personal life could also be made salient merely by sharing non-work-related aspects of people's life. Moreover, people felt a moral tension when they raised an ethical issue between caring for the work and caring for the other person at work. At Comms, this tension was rationalised into the happy-productive worker thesis, namely the belief that happier people make more productive workers. This belief allowed to re-affirm work productivity as the sole function of work relationships.

The second section of the chapter presents findings about the temporality of the process. It explains that the mental model of the good way to behave with each other at work evolves dynamically in the discourse according to anchors in the situation. Moreover, the mental model of the issue evolves over longer periods of time. Individuals resolve the initial ambiguity of the issue over years of work experience.

Finally, from these findings, a process model of the construction of the ethical issue of care is presented. The model showcases how an issue can either be constructed as an ethical one, i.e. raising ethical awareness, or on the contrary be rationalised and not raise any ethical flag.

# CHAPTER 7 - Discussion of the research contributions to theory and society

## Introduction

The purpose of this last chapter is to carve out the contributions that this piece of research represents for the advancement of knowledge, as well as the potential use of this research for the real world. This research contributes to two bodies of scholarship: relationships at work and ethical issues in organisations. Regarding the former, I propose a meaningful typology of the relationships at work that rests on the dimensions of care and instrumentality. Good relationships at work are constructed along two competing responsibilities: caring for the work and caring for the other person at work. The four types of good relationships that emerge are courteous interactions, convivial relationships, supportive relationships and friendships. This discovery proposes a platform for advancing research on relationships at work that rests on different theoretical frameworks. It also contributes to understanding how the quality of relationships at work stems from the perception of the organisational context. Finally, it contributes to understanding the hurdles to implement care in organisations.

Moreover, the research highlights the process leading to the construction of the ethical issue of care in the organisation. This issue can arise in the conflict in responsibility between taking care of the work and taking care of the other person at work. The research unveils processes of rationalisation and thus contributes to criticizing rationalist assumptions in ethical decision making scholarship. In particular, the research findings contribute to understanding the role of intuitive processes, especially through affects, in the construction of ethical issues at work.

Last, this research allows raising broader practical issues. The question of care responsibility echoes the societal responsibility of organisations. Finally, I will discuss the implications of this research for the question of how to incur social change.

## **I–Typology of ‘good’ work relationships**

This section presents the contribution of the research to the field of relationships at work. From the empirical analysis, I propose a typology of relationships at work that is underpinned by two dimensions: whether the relationship allows caring for the work and caring for the other person. This research makes three contributions to knowledge on relationships at work. First, it provides a homogenous description of the phenomenon that can serve as a platform for exchange for the different streams of research concerned with the phenomenon of relationships at work. Second, it exposes how the quality of relationships is constructed in the workplace, unpacking the role of the organisational context. Third, it unveils the tension of care allocation between caring for the work and caring for the worker, which raises the question of the compatibility between care and instrumentality.

### **Model of good relationships at work: instrumentality versus care**

In the field of management and organisations, several streams of research are concerned with relationships at work, such as positive relationships at work (e.g. Dutton and Ragins, 2007), social networks (e.g. Kilduff and Brass, 2010) or leader-member exchanges (e.g. Schermuly and Meyer, 2016). These different streams use different concepts to designate the empirical phenomenon of work relationships, such as social or interpersonal interactions, connections, or friendships. In particular, the latter has different meanings from voluntary and personal relationships (Bridge and Baxter, 1992) to ties that provide extra resources (Lincoln and Miller, 1979). These different conceptual definitions limit the potentialities for knowledge exchange and advancement. I propose an empirical typology of ‘good’ work relationships to address this predicament. Here ‘good’ refers to what people in a work organisation consider to be appropriate. It does not refer to a normative evaluation of goodness. While researchers have proposed various views of what good relationships (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009), high-quality interpersonal relationships (Carmeli, *et al.*, 2009), positive relationships (Dutton and

Ragins, 2007), or strong ties (Kilduff and Brass, 2010) are, I propose an empirical definition.

From the findings of this research, four types of good relationships at work are defined: courteous interaction, convivial relationship, supportive relationship, and friendship.

#### *Courteous interaction*

In this first level, the prescribed interactional behaviour rests entirely on work instrumentality. The purpose of having courteous interactions is to be able to work well together. The term 'interaction' has been chosen instead of 'relationship' to stress the commonality of the other person in this type of relationship. Here the idea is to get along with anybody. As long as the person works in the same organisation, she ought to be the recipient of courtesy. In this case, being courteous means being polite, respectful and considerate of the other person merely because she is another person. This type of relationship has been observed in situations when people do not work together on a regular basis, which rarely happened in the two organisations that have been observed. People described this interactional behaviour as the minimum effort that can be made with people at work. At Comms, this was rarely observed since the norm was to be cheerful and friendly. This was observed in Public Relations for instance, where a few people were considered less friendly (and criticised by others for it). Matheo was not cheerful and friendly, but he always talked to other people politely and with respect. Furthermore, when asked about the appropriate way to behave with each other at work, interviewees described this type of relationship as making the minimum effort. At Serv, this type of relationship was also described as the minimum effort to make. In practice, it was sometimes observed at Serv in relationships with people from the other social service in the building. They belonged to the same overarching organisation but never worked together and had an overall competitive or even conflictual relationship with the service in general. However, it was evident to everybody that they would endeavour to be courteous with each other. This meant greeting each other when encountering each other in the corridors, addressing each other with forms of politeness, and considering the impact of one's action on the other person.

This type of relationship was not considered optimal for work because there was no particular pleasure to work with each other. On the contrary, courteous interactions represent a conscious effort, as a professional endeavour. The reasoning was rather that this low level of care for the other person was required so as not to hamper the work. As a result, this type of interaction is both low in care for the work and low in care for the person. Low in care for the work does not mean that people individually do not care about the work, but that the contribution to productivity of this type of relationship was considered minimal. In the two organisations observed, people greatly valued having pleasant relationships. Hence, courteous interactions were only representing a transitional stage, when they first started to work together, but it quickly evolved to 'convivial relationships'.

#### *Convivial relationship*

Convivial relationships were the type of relationships that were most frequently observed at Comms and at Serv. Here, the term 'relationship' has been chosen because the phenomenon refers to a pattern of interaction already established between particular persons. Convivial relationships apply between people who have met more than once and who work together on a regular basis. Convivial means friendly and cheerful. It involves a higher degree of emotional involvement than courteous interaction. It includes offering coffee during meetings, enquiring about each other's life as a way to build bonds and joking around. In convivial relationships people have pleasure being together, they have positive affects towards each other. They build these positive affects by taking care of each other in the moment that they are working together. However, the care for the other person does not expand beyond the very moment of the interaction.

Convivial relationships represented a type of relationship considered optimal at Comms. Employees at Comms had fun together, did care about each other's comfort at work, and tried to like working together. To reach this level of affect in relationships, they shared some of the personal aspects of their lives, but only to a superficial level, avoiding talking about personal issues or any truly important aspects of their personal lives. As they were getting along well, they could be sad when somebody was leaving the company.

Convivial relationships were praised because they allowed caring for the work. The pleasure to work together was considered to enhance the motivation to work and as a result would yield better productivity, better communication and better coordination, both in the short and in the long run. In this type of relationships, people cared more for each other than in courteous interaction because they knew each other and they liked each other. However, the attention in the relationship was occupied by the work, and the relationship was purposefully limited to the work and would not be too personal.

At Serv convivial relationships were also considered suitable for work. They enhanced the pleasure to work together and facilitated collaboration. However, they were not considered the optimal type of work relationships. At Serv, people considered that the ideal type of relationships should involve more caring for each other. Hence they were striving for supportive relationships.

#### *Supportive relationship*

Convivial relationships evolved in supportive relationships through a higher degree of care in relationships. People in supportive relationships at work demonstrate the purposive willingness to support a particular other. This meant dedicating spaces within the work boundaries to check how people are coping with their work. It meant noticing when somebody is in difficulty or expressing one's own difficulties to others to seek support from them. At Serv, this type of relationships was frequently observed. When somebody had issues with her work, she would talk about it in one of the team meetings or at another moment in the offices, and her colleagues (co-workers or manager) would help her solve her problems, either by giving advice or by taking action. Supportive relationships were also visible in the anticipation of personal difficulties, for instance, proposing one's help on a task that was expected to be more difficult or unpleasant for a particular person. This care for the person tended to expand beyond the work. People knew about each other's personal constraints or particular problems and tried to help the person with this knowledge.

However, not all relationships at Serv were supportive because this type of work relationship requires the ability to notice a need for support and

to provide resources to address this need. Many personal and professional constraints (time, conflict of schedule, capacity to empathise) hindered the support, and as a result, supportive relationships were an ideal that Serv employees regretted they could not always attain.

Care for the work was still high in supportive relationships. People justified the need to support each other because this support was beneficial to the work. However, as the care for the other person was important as well, there could be tensions between caring for the work and caring for the worker.

At Comms, supportive relationships were observed less frequently. Most relationships were between a manager and her or his subordinates. A manager had to support his or her subordinates as part of his or her job. The point of this support was to take care of the work. The rationale was that a person who is not well would not be productive. The concealment of the personal life at work did not allow developing care for the other person at work. Supporting colleagues can clash with professional responsibilities affecting time resources, hence it was not considered suitable. The risk of increasing care for the other person at work introduced the possibility of friendship and that was considered unsuitable in the workplace.

### *Friendship*

Friendship refers to relationships where people share activities and interests that are not related to work. The relationship exists independently of the work. People explained cases where they were friends before starting working together or that a work relationship evolved and became friendship, but in any case, it was almost never observed. People who shared friendship at work did not demonstrate this friendship in the workplace. For instance, Fanny from Public Relations explained that she was friends with Sandra in the same service, and for that reason she told her about her plans to leave the company, but I did not observe any patterns of interaction between them that were different than those of any other members of the team. At work they enacted convivial relationships, i.e. the optimal type of relationships at Comms.

The main characteristic of friendship was that it was considered to be in the personal rather than the professional realm. People were sometimes even embarrassed to admit that they currently had a friend in the workplace.

On the contrary, they were emphasising that one should not be friends at work, especially at Comms. At Serv, there was no rule prohibiting friendship. Nevertheless, most people highlighted that they liked their colleagues very much but did not want to be friends because they wanted to keep a distance between their work life and their personal life. Friendship was assimilated to personal relationships, as opposed to work. It is still part of this typology of positive work relationships because friendship happens in the workplace as well, whether it originates there or not. Friendship meant that the relationship was not justified by the work effort and exchanges were happening extra-organisationally. This type of relationship extends beyond the physical and psychological boundaries of work. For instance, friends see each other outside of work, even after they stop working in the organisation.

Friends care about each other and as a result, conflicts of interest can happen with the work. At Comms, this personal-professional conflict underpinned the reason for friendship prohibition, whereas at Serv, people were emphasising protecting themselves and their family. They were trying to limit spillover of work into personal life.

*Typology of good work relationships: caring for the work and caring for the other person at work*

This typology results from the observation of the confrontation and tentative reconciliation of two implicit visions of the work relationships: caring for the work and caring for the other person (see Figure 3 below). It means that people evaluate the types of relationships on their capacity to serve these two different purposes. It does not mean that the persons in the relationship care more or less about each of these ends, but that the quality of the relationship allows more or less for caring about them.

Here, care means providing care in the whole process: from paying attention, to taking charge of the problem, taking care of the problem in practice, and checking that the problem is taken care of (Tronto, 1993). Relationships that are high in the dimension of 'care for the work' are deemed suitable to achieve work objectives by the research participants. Relationships that are high in the dimension 'care for the other person' are deemed suitable to support the other person.

On the level of care for the work, friendships are at the lowest level because, in the way that participants defined them, they do not have a work purpose. Courteous interactions are also at a low level of care for the work because they are functional but do not provide any particular benefit. Convivial relationships and supportive relationships are both at a high level of care for the work because these types of relationships provide symbolic and material benefits such as pleasure to work, assistance on the task, or access to resources such as information. However, supportive relationships are slightly lower because their high level in the other dimension, care for the other person, which creates a conflict in responsibilities, and thus is considered riskier for work.

On the dimension of care for the other person, friendships are at the highest level because their purpose is to focus on the other person as a particular other. Supportive relationships are also high on this dimension because they are directed at the other person, and the level of closeness allows knowing the other person as a particular other. Convivial relationships are lower on this dimension because they are directed towards the work, and people do not connect on personal matters. Finally, courteous interactions are low in this dimension because they involve a low level of personal sharing and are only meant to be functional.

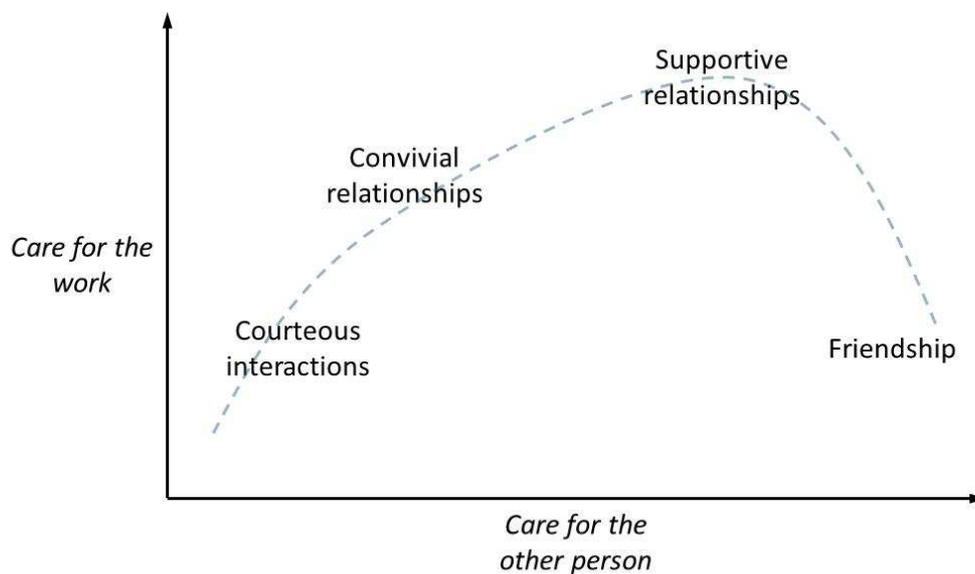


Figure 3: Empirical typology of good work relationships

## **Common conceptualisation of good work relationships**

‘Concepts are necessarily empirically underdetermined’  
(Tsoukas, 2009, p.298)

Many streams of research focus on relationships at work such as social networks (e.g. Kilduff and Brass, 2010), positive work relationships (Ragins and Dutton, 2007), leader-member exchange (e.g. Scandura and Graen, 1984; Maslyn and Uhl-Bien, 2001) and team-member exchanges (Banks, *et al.*, 2014). Depending on their perspective, they have different views of what a 'good' relationship is. It can be providing material or symbolic benefits such as ideas and assistance (Kilduff and Brass, 2010; Varella, *et al.*, 2012; Banks, *et al.*, 2014; Walter, *et al.*, 2015), giving vitality and aliveness (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003), or even improving health (Heaphy and Dutton, 2008).

This typology provides a proposition for defining 'good' relationships at work that is based on empirical investigations. What people consider 'good' has a multiplicity of meanings, and this multiplicity reflects the different views in the literature. However, from this empirical work, two main dimensions emerge. These dimensions reflect whether the relationship enables caring for the work on the one hand and caring for the other person on the other hand. I have drawn four types of relationships that represent different positions on these two dimensions (see Figure 3). The two types that were praised the most in the organisations studied were convivial relationships (ideal type at Comms) and supportive relationships (ideal type at Serv). Both enabled caring for the work, but the latter also enabled caring for the person, which was considered suitable at Serv but not at Comms. Courteous interactions were considered the minimum level of quality that had to be provided in all work situations. This type was defined as the best of the worst, and enacted a low level of care for the work as well as a low level of care for the person. Finally, friendships were considered unsuitable in the workplace because the degree of care for the other person was too high to enable caring for the work at the same time.

The typology describes people's views accurately both at Comms and at Serv, but the ideal type of work relationship was different in the two settings. It is expected that people in different organisations with different activities, structures, and culture would have different views of which of these

relationship types is the most suitable at work. For instance, it has been shown that the unsuitability of romantic relationships at work was a western idea (Mano and Gabriel, 2006). At Comms, the optimal type of relationships was considered to be convivial relationships, but at Serv, where the turnover was lower, and the content of the work could be hard to deal with emotionally, supportive relationships were considered optimal, even though they were not systematically enacted. For instance, it is expected that in difficult working conditions communities of coping (Korczynski, 2003) institute supportive relationships as the model to follow.

This typology accounts for the subjective experience of work relationships, and for the instrumental benefits from the relationship. Hence, it accounts for definitions of quality of work relationships adopted in different streams of research. Hence the definition of the different types of relationships has the chance to be adopted by these different streams of research. For instance research on social networks usually uses the word 'friends' to account for a phenomenon that I define here as convivial or supportive relationships. Both these types of relationships can provide resources for work, while courteous interactions would not account for somebody's network. Friendships can also provide resources, but a different type of resources probably. In the view that is developed here, friendships go beyond the work and are voluntary and noninstrumental. Hence they might provide specific benefits that other types or relationships do not provide, but only in specific conditions.

### **How good relationships are constructed in the workplace**

Work organisations constitute a specific context for the development of relationships (Ferris, *et al.*, 2009), but how this context is shaping the quality of relationships has yet to be researched (Kark, 2011; Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). The typology of good work relationships elaborated out of the research findings showcases how the workplace is a unique context in which people construct the good way to behave with each other. Research on relationships at work have emphasised that the workplace is particularly conducive to the development of relationships (Sias and Cahill, 1998). However, the mechanisms that lead to high-quality relationships have been mostly limited

to the individual level, and the organisational context reduced to a moderator between individual factors and high-quality relationships (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011). The empirical typology of good work relationships highlight that people consider that good relationships should enable to take care of the work. Hence, the work objectives constitute an overarching framework that limits the type of relationship that is suitable in the workplace.

The cognitive, emotional, and behavioural mechanisms (Stephens, *et al.*, 2011) have been observed in the two settings, but they were bordered by the work objectives. For instance, some people were more able than others to process information about others, to put themselves in others' shoes, or on the contrary to project a positive image of themselves. While most individuals at Serv had such capacity, Arlette did not. She was not able to fully understand others' situations or feelings. However, she meant to be professional, i.e. to work well, and as a result she endeavoured to be nice to others. Hence, while she was not able to care for the others cognitively and emotionally, at least she cared for the work and she was keen to be helpful (sometimes to the detriment of her own tasks) and always utmost respectful to others. While she did not have the cognitive and emotional capacity for high-quality connections, she still had positive relationships with people at work thanks to motivation for the work and basic relational skills learned through her professional experience.

Hence, the dual focus on individual and organisational levels that was adopted in this research allows seeing the broader picture of how the workplace context shapes patterns of relational behaviours. Sias and Cahill (1998) forecast that 'the organisational context is likely to impact peer friendships in unique and important ways that distinguish the development of these relationships from extra-organisational friendships.' (p.278). This research points out that people purposefully shape the quality of relationships according to their view of work requirements.

In particular, the level of affect in the relationship has to be purposefully monitored. A too low-level of affect, such as courteous interactions, was seen as sub-optimal because people would not have fun, and would not like each other enough to work at their best. This confirms the idea that fun enhances high-quality relationships (Tews, *et al.*, 2014). However, a too high-level of affect, such as friendships, was seen as counterproductive

because caring for the person would jeopardise caring for the work. At Comms, the ideal level of affect in relationships was lower than at Serv, but in any case, the overarching framework of work production was guiding people's objectives in the way they formed their relationships at work.

This research shows that the quality of work relationships is constructed according to work objectives. The subjective experience of the relationship at work is only a means to achieve organisational ends. The level of affect in the relationship is closely monitored in regard with the organisational function of the relationship.

### **Care versus instrumentality: the ethical dilemma of care allocation**

'The moral question an ethic of care takes as central is not – What, if anything, do I (we) owe to others? But rather – How can I (we) best meet my (our) caring responsibilities? To meet one's caring responsibilities has both universal and particular components. On the one hand, it requires a determination of what caring responsibilities are, in general. On the other hand, it requires a focus upon the particular kinds of responsibilities and burdens that we might assume because of who, and where, we are situated.' (Tronto, 1993, p.137).

Voices have called for the development of care in organisations (Liedtka, 1996; Gittell and Douglass, 2012; Rynes, *et al.*, 2012). However, the question of how care in relationships can be fostered in organisations has been studied conceptually (e.g. Gittell and Douglass, 2012), but still lacks empirical investigations. In this empirical research, I find an ethical issue between caring for workers and caring for the work. Caring for the other is found to be in conflict with the performance imperative. That is not to say that both are irreconcilable. However, this raises tensions for the individual between the moral imperatives she feels to care for people and for the work. The need for productivity, for performance, for individual and collective success, competes in attention with the care for people's needs. This leads to a dilemma of responsibilities. I do not mean that care for the co-worker should be the ethical standard at work. The employee is arguably responsible for providing the work that she committed herself to provide. This resonates with the ethical issue identified by Tronto (1993) in the practical implementation of an ethics of

care: the question of the allocation of care. She states that 'in general, caring will always create moral dilemmas because the needs for care are infinite.' (p.137). In this empirical study, I find conflicting responsibilities towards co-workers, clients, social service users, shareholders, one's families, and even oneself. For instance, at Serv, people did not want to develop friendships with co-workers, because it could lead to increase the need to care for them while they were already struggling to care for their families and leave their work duties at bay in their personal lives.

*Implications for role conflicts: Compatibility between caring for the person and instrumentality at work?*

Role conflicts between friends and work have already been emphasised in the literature (Bridge and Baxter, 1992; Riordan and Griffeth, 1995; Grayson, 2007), however, this research was only focusing on the marginal case of friendship. This research shows that all relationships at work are impacted by this role conflict. The imperative to care for a particular other does not only apply to friends but colleagues that work together on an everyday basis who feel a duty to care for each other that can conflict with the objectives of the work. Previous research on role conflicts enacted the workplace instrumentality by focusing on the effect of friendship on business (Grayson, 2007) or on career (Elsesser and Peplau, 2006) and whether organisations should promote or discourage friendship at work on this basis. From the feminist ethics of care, the attention is drawn towards interests for the person rather than for the business.

This research highlights that fulfilling work roles leads to give pre-eminence of organisational goals over personal interests. Hence the project of a relational bureaucracy (Gittell and Douglass, 2012) that would foster a genuine concern for the interest of a particular other (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993) appears doubtful. In this relational model of organisational bureaucracy, relationships between workers, managers and customers are based on their needs of each other to achieve organisational ends. However, this research's empirical findings cast doubt on this potential compatibility between work roles and caring relationships. This finding does not deny that 'caring can indeed exist in role-based relationships as well as in personal relationships'

(Gittell and Douglass, 2012, p.728), but it highlights the complexities in implementing such a project as relational bureaucracy.

I find that when people connect through work roles, the overarching objective of serving organisational goals limits the quality of relationships. These findings corroborate Belmi & Pfeffer's (2015) claim that the work role hinders the reciprocity in relationships: 'there are theoretical reasons to expect that merely having someone think of themselves as occupying a role in an organisation can weaken that individual's desire to reciprocate and the sense of having an obligation to do so.' (p. 95).

I do not claim that workplaces do not exist where caring and compassionate relationships can develop, as other researchers have observed (e.g. Lilius, *et al.*, 2011). I see these discrepancies as an opportunity to propose a complementary questioning to research on quality of relationships at work. Compassionate behaviours have been defined as aiming to alleviate suffering (Kanov, *et al.*, 2004; George, 2014) but I question whether these compassionate behaviours were oriented towards the organisation (i.e. freeing from pain to function better) or towards helping the person in pain as an end, and how such a difference might change the nature of the relationship.

## **II– Contribution to understanding the construction of ethical issues in organisations**

At Comms and Serv, people made sense of the issue of the 'good' way to behave with each other differently. At Comms, people considered that relationships at work had to fulfil professional functions only. They felt a moral duty to care for other persons at work but rationalised this duty into the happy-productive worker thesis. According to this belief, happier people make more productive workers, hence, caring for the persons at work is seen as directly productive. At Serv, people expressed that they felt a moral dilemma between caring for the work and caring for the person at work. They regretted that they did not always manage to be supportive to each other. They stressed that their concern for their mission happened to trump their concern for their colleagues and wondered whether this hierarchy of concerns ought to be.

In this section, I will first describe how the construction of ethical issues at work is infused by affects that appears through processes of rationalisation. Sonenshein (2007) develops a sensemaking-intuitionist model of ethical issues that comprises three phases, namely the issue construction, the intuitive judgment, and the explanation-justification phase. He stresses the role of intuitive processes, i.e. affective and automatic, in the judgment phase of ethical issues, but not on other phases that rest on reflective processes. This research refines this theoretical model by unveiling the role of affective processes in the issue construction phase. In particular, these affective dimensions take place at the individual and the collective level through processes of rationalisation (Festinger, 1957; Fotaki and Hyde, 2015; de Klerk, 2017).

Subsequently, I discuss the contributions for theory. I believe that the contribution of this research to understanding the construction of ethical issues in organisations rests on unpacking the role of affective processes. While current models considered affective processes as influencing the main reflective system (Sonenshein, 2007; Dinh and Lord, 2013), the findings in this research suggest a much more central role of affects. Moreover, while the collective dimension of ethical sensemaking had been empirically described as deliberative (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015), I extend this view by unveiling the implicit aspects of the collective dimension of sensemaking. Finally, I will discuss the processes underpinning the phenomenon of ethical framing (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 1999; Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012).

### **Empirical evidence of processes of rationalisation**

I summarise here how findings provide evidence for rationalisation of the sensemaking process through repressing affects.

#### *Not initiating the sensemaking process through repressing affects*

The literature stresses that the need for sensemaking is triggered by equivocality and ambiguity (Weick, 1995; Weick, *et al.*, 2005; Sonenshein, 2007). I find that these are socially constructed, and greatly infused by affects. The sensemaking process is supposed to include bracketing the environment so as to select cues (Weick, *et al.*, 2005). I find that cues are bracketed at the

collective level, and the individual has only access cues selected this way. At Comms, people were concealing negative aspects related to their person, such as personal issues at home, or any personal elements that could become a weakness at work. Hence, no suffering was made apparent. The cues available for extraction in the environment did not contain elements that would trigger a need for care. On the contrary, the elements that were salient in the environment were all related to work performance. This availability of cues is determined at the collective level, from organisational culture or subculture (Pettigrew, 1979; Frost, 1991). From this collective framing, the individuals extract cues in the environment that limit the range of elements available for noticing. When work performance is constantly highlighted as a pressing objective, a tunnel vision tends to crystallise around this one objective, obscuring the need for care.

Affects can prevent the sensemaking process to happen without reaching the level of awareness. This research has shown that employees at work limit the level of affects in relationships so as to avoid disruptive emotions. As affects precede emotions (Fotaki, *et al.*, 2017), limiting affects allows to repress emotions then to not trigger sensemaking and stay in a non-disruptive situation. When people are concealing their suffering, even to themselves, it allows them to sustain the mental model of the pre-eminence of work imperatives. No new sensemaking process is triggered, and the issue of the good way to behave with each other at work remains framed as a business one, leaving potential ethical aspects overlooked. This happens through collective and intuitive processes. The individuals do not reason reflectively that they are avoiding negative emotions by repressing affects at work. They explain that they need to avoid conflicts between personal and professional interests.

Moreover, to avoid negative emotions, people will select cues for sensemaking that belong to a frame that is not too affect-laden. For instance, at Comms, personal issues that could arise from work relationships are not made available for sensemaking. Joséphine, whose employment contract will be terminated, does not discuss the consequences of her ability to pay her rent, but only on her reflections for career shifts.

### *Adhering to beliefs that are consistent with existing behaviours*

Once a need for sensemaking has been triggered, the process of making sense starts, and stops when a plausible account of the situation has been elaborated (Weick, 1995; Maitlis and Christianson, 2013). I find that individuals in the organisation share beliefs that allow for confirming their relational behaviours as ‘making sense’. Individuals intuitively seek to adhere to beliefs that justify their behaviours as consistent (Festinger, 1957). When an event like the pain of a co-worker triggers a need for sensemaking, meanings that have been defined collectively will still apply to the situation. In particular, the ‘happy-productive worker thesis’ (Wright and Staw, 1999) was found to be a common representation that allows making sense of an event like the pain of a co-worker. This line of reason stresses that a happy worker will be more productive. Thanks to this line of reasoning, alleviating the pain of a co-worker can be justified by a productive rationale. This representation allows making sense of instances when people support each other without having to raise the ethical issue of the competing responsibilities between the work and the worker. Since taking care of the work and taking care of the worker are believed to be aligned, there should be no conflict. This representation is a shared belief, and individuals assess situations under the light of this shared belief.

### **Processes of rationalisation in the construction of ethical issues at work**

Calls have been made to better understand the role of non-rational processes in ethical behaviours (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Dinh and Lord, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Rational processes imply not only reflective reasoning but even a type of logical thinking (Evans, 2010). This research contributes to answering this call by showing that affective processes play a role in the construction of ethical issues at work. It shows that people manipulate their beliefs and affects so as to avoid feeling inconsistent. In particular, the inconsistency leads to experience negative moral emotions.

Drawing on Dane & Pratt (2007), Sonenshein (2007) defines intuitions as affective and automatic reactions (p. 1031) and places the intuitive judgment after the construction of the ethical issue. From this empirical

research, I find on the contrary that the affectivity plays an important role in the construction of the issue itself. The most evident presence of affectivity is observable in the phenomenon of rationalisation of ethicality (Bandura, 1999; Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012; de Klerk, 2017).

A function of the rationalisation is to fill the gaps in reasoning and appear rational, that is to say when behaviour and beliefs are consistent (Festinger, 1957), as if we were to follow rigorous logics. Everybody tends to think of oneself as a rational being (Cabantous, *et al.*, 2010; Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2011). However, in everyday behaviour we cannot evaluate every action but have to rely on fast thinking (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). Fast thinking is where the intuitive system intervenes (Haidt, 2001; Evans, 2010). Once the mental model of work relationships has been established, it does not need to be put into question. For instance, employees in this research acted in a way that placed work outcomes first and relationships second. After some time, work relationships become a habit that does not require intentionality (Ajzen, 1991; Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012), hence how to relate to each other at work does not involve reflective reasoning anymore. Habitualized, people do not necessarily remember why they decided to behave this way in the first place. Yet, if asked (by a researcher for example) why they behave one way or another, people tend to find reasons to rationalise their behaviour, i.e. to appear rational. The conscious reflexivity that is required in the interview setting can trigger explanations that are rather post-hoc rationalisations (Haidt, 2001; Evans, 2010; Thompson, *et al.*, 2011) than the real cues on which the sensemaking process was initially based (Palazzo, *et al.*, 2012).

Hence, findings from this research make two contributions to research on ethical behaviours at work. First, I unpack how ethical behaviours at work are not rational. While the critics of the field on rationalist assumptions is not new (Sonenshein, 2007; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Bazerman and Tenbrunsel, 2013; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014), I contribute to these critics by unveiling the processes of rationalisation that lead to the rationalist mistake. Second, I contribute to refine the theoretical model initiated by Sonenshein (2007) of the construction of ethical issues at work. Sonenshein (2007) had highlighted this rationalisation of the ethical judgement in the explanation phase of his model, however, I find that the rationalisation happens *a priori*

the issue construction phase. People do not have to judge an issue as unethical when they have rationalised the ethicality of the issue in the first place.

#### *Implications for emotions in sensemaking: the role of affects*

Consistently with previous research, I observe the role of emotion in sensemaking processes (Maitlis, *et al.*, 2013). Similarly to the work of Maitlis and colleagues, I find that the process of sensemaking is strongly influenced by emotions, in particular in the triggering of the process and in the content of the process. This happens when noticing somebody's suffering. The emotion raised by somebody's suffering creates a need to care for the person, and to make apparent the conflict between caring for the work and caring for the person.

However, this research also points out to the role of affects and not only of emotions, in the sensemaking process. As opposed to emotions, affects do not necessarily reach the level of consciousness (Elfenbein, 2007; Fotaki, *et al.*, 2017). I find that an increase in the level of affects in work relationships triggers a need for sensemaking. The main mental model of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work positions work as the objective of work relationships. However, when people connect more deeply with people at work, they question this sole focus of work relationships. When a work relationship becomes friendship using this person as a means to achieve organisational ends does not make sense anymore and the individual questions the mental model. The affective bonds lead to concern for the other person which raises awareness of the question of what is the good way to treat each other at work. In previous research, the role of emotions in sensemaking has been considered as conscious states (Grandey, 2008; Maitlis, *et al.*, 2013; Grandey and Gabriel, 2015). This research extends this work by pointing out the role of affects in triggering or avoiding triggering a process of sensemaking.

#### *The value of rationalising*

From a behavioural ethics point of view, rationalising moral emotions has negative consequences. Teper and colleagues (2011) found that unethical behaviours are fostered from the inability to access the affective experience that occurs during real-life moral dilemmas. Similarly, I find that rationalising the moral emotion leads to overlooking the ethical issue of conflicting

responsibilities between caring for the work and caring for the other person at work. However, it does not mean that rationalising is considered an irrational process, i.e. escaping logics. The reasons that people use to justify their behaviours are not random. They are relevant. They serve the function of stabilising a system because the cost of changing is high. Ongoing change is associated with negative emotions that have a negative impact on psychological health and well-being at work (Kiefer, 2005; Kiefer and Barclay, 2012). In this sense, rationalising avoids perceiving change and thus protects the self against anxiety (Menzies, 1960; Fotaki and Hyde, 2015; de Klerk, 2017).

From this research, the influence of affects does not appear as erratic, inconsistent, and random. On the contrary, affects serve an important function of making the individual organisationally functional. In order to be able to perform at work, people have to shield from moral emotions that could harm them and the organisation. The influence of affects in individuals' judgments and behaviours reflects as well the effort of the individuals to fit in within a collective.

### **The collective in ethical sensemaking**

While previous work has shown the deliberative aspects of ethical sensemaking (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015), this research addresses a case of ethical sensemaking in which the collective dimension does not play out through direct communications. In the case of the good way to behave with each other at work, people scarcely negotiate the moral character of the situation through verbal interactions, but share implicit representations. At Comms, people allocated a productive value to their relationships. They used people instrumentally to achieve organisational ends. However, the ethical choice to favour work over people was only implicit. They only meant to enhance work but did not think through the ethical consequences of this meaning. As a result, their discourse contrasted with observations of their behaviours. This contrast allowed unveiling how the collective influences behaviours in a way that did not reach the level of awareness. Individuals made sense of the issue of the good way to behave with each other at work based on their actual behaviours. The explicit result of this sensemaking was a

justification of their behaviour for work purposes. People naturally imitate others' behaviours in organisations and from their behaviours they subsequently make sense of the situation. They reflect on the issue of the 'good' way to behave with each other at work from their and other's actual behaviours. For this reason, for instance, novice people conform quickly in their behaviour when they become members of the organisation but they have difficulty to verbalise their mental model of the situation.

#### *Implication for the process of sensemaking*

This research unpacks the different ways in which the collective and the individual levels interplay in the sensemaking process. Building on Stigliani and Ravisi (2012) and on Weick and colleagues (2005), Heaphy (2017) states that 'Sensemaking that occurs in organisations is referred to as collective sensemaking, as it unfolds among multiple stakeholders who exchange provisional understandings and try to construct an interpretation and course of action.' (p.644). They refer to the collective aspects of sensemaking as the exchange activity in which people engage and that lead to a shared understanding of the situation. The collective sensemaking that I observe in this research is more pervasive than mere exchanges because it is implicit. There were instances where people could talk about the good way to behave with each other, but these instances were rarely observed and were not the most important mechanism in which the collective aspects were playing out.

I have shown that the affective and the collective infuse the sensemaking process by conditioning the trigger for sensemaking and by providing the elements that are taken into consideration in the sensemaking process. I find that the enactment phase is not necessarily after a reflective phase of constructing a plausible account of the situation. On the contrary, people enact a collective meaning and subsequently their own behaviour is a cue for sensemaking. This finding allows reflecting on the ontology of the sensemaking process (Sandberg and Tsoukas, 2014). The sensemaking perspective has proved a heuristic framework for this research. However, the case of the ethical issue of care in organisations represents a marginal case to the scholarship of sensemaking that tends to focus on crisis or events disrupting the ongoing understanding of the situation drastically. The question of whether the empirical observations in this research are a case of

sensemaking reflects the question of the ontology of sensemaking. If sensemaking is necessarily a conscious and effortful process (Maitlis, *et al.*, 2013), then this research is not about sensemaking. However, if sensemaking can be effortless and implicit, then this research contributes to the sensemaking scholarship by providing evidence to redefine the process of sensemaking as iterative and ongoing.

### **Ethical (un)awareness and ethical framing**

Many calls have been made to take better account of ethical unawareness in the occurrence of ethical behaviours (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). However, these calls assume that ethical awareness, i.e. recognising the ethicality of an issue, is a factor among others. At the same time, many scholars have pointed out the inability of the field to define ethical behaviour as a major shortage for the development of the field (Randall and Gibson, 1990; Donaldson and Dunfee, 1994; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008). This research shows that both critics are actually closely linked. I studied how an ethical issue is constructed in the workplace. Results indicate that there are paths leading to raising the ethical issue between caring for the work and caring for the person at work and other paths leading to not raising this ethical issue. Hence, what makes a behaviour ethical is determined in situation. This research contributes to scholarship on ethical behaviour by showing that the awareness of the ethical issue is not a factor of ethical behaviour but is an intrinsic part of the ethical behaviour. When participants of an experiment are cheating because a business frame has been triggered (Kouchaki, *et al.*, 2013), they are actually responding to an ethical position that compels them to do whatever it takes to win. I would argue that their behaviour is unethical if they recognise cheating as unethical and cheat anyway.

When Bandura (1999) describes moral disengagement (Bandura, 1999), or Tenbrunsel and colleagues ethical fading (Tenbrunsel, *et al.*, 2010), their discovery comes from the surprise that a behaviour that was considered unethical in a certain historical and social context loses its ethical characterisation in another context. This question pertains to the study of the evolution of ethical awareness. I argue that the evolution of ethical awareness

would open up fruitful avenues for understanding the phenomenon of ethical framing.

### **III-Broader implications**

This research focused on the quality of relationships at work and on the construction of ethical issues in organisations. However, the findings lead to reflections beyond these fields. In this section, I will develop two broader implications of this research. First, I will discuss how the findings lead to questioning the societal role of work organisations. Second, I will discuss how this research contributes nourishing a critical project of transformation in research in management.

#### **Implications for questioning the role of work organisations in society**

The research presented here deals with the interplay between the individual and the organisational level, however, I believe it is important for research impact to draw links with higher level of analysis.

Luce Irigaray, in a talk she gave at the University of Warwick in June 2014, argued that ethics starts by recognising our place as human beings. I believe that as human beings we are primarily social beings. The roles we have towards a person, a group, or society, define and constrain our possibilities of thinking and acting (Chapman and Long, 2009; Fotaki, *et al.*, 2012; Long, 2015). A worker is invested in a role in his or her work organisation, and this positioning is deeply rooted in his or her social identity and psychological construction. This research has shown that questioning the ethics of fulfilling this role comes at the cost of psychological and social discomfort. Rather than leaving the responsibility at the individual level, I would like to elevate the question to a social and political endeavour. The transferring of this question to the organisational level leads to asking the following question: what is the role of work organisations in society?

The question of the role of work organisations in society is relevant because more and more voices show that they can be completely out of step with the rest of society (Jackall, 1988). The segmentation between work and

life that is operated has repercussions on the workplace morality (Anteby, 2003; Belmi and Pfeffer, 2015). In this research, it appears that people are entitled to treating the other person with a different morality at work than in real life. For instance, using other persons instrumentally as means to achieve organisational ends is morally acceptable in the workplace. Who confers this right to morality exemptions in workplaces? At the time when Kant was writing about the categorical imperative, there was no definite separation between work life and personal life. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, work was not spatially distinguished from life. With capitalism, 'industrial spatial division did represent a significant shift from feudalist economic arrangements' (Fleming and Spicer, 2004, p.78). Some argue that post-industrial workplaces represent the blurriness of work and non-work spaces (Fleming and Spicer, 2004), but psychologically both spaces are segmented and spill over more or less on each other depending on the workplace and individuals' endeavour (Poppleton, *et al.*, 2008). More than the question of physical space, the question of symbolic roles is critical. How individuals manage their different roles is important for well-being (Clark, 2000; Sluss and Ashforth, 2007; Lewis, 2008). This research contributes showing that the conflict between roles can be distressing for individuals. At Serv, employees recognised a conflict between their multiple responsibilities. They felt the responsibility to care for each other at work, but also to care for their work, in their case, fostering children in need.

This question of roles of individuals in and outside work organisations leads to questioning the role of work organisations in society. Are organisations responsible for caring for their members? More broadly, what is the responsibility of work organisations? Before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, corporations had unlimited responsibilities (Djelic, 2013). Today, the organisation seems to be exempt from the moral obligations that are due to the rest of society. However, more and more voices call for a political responsibility of private organisations in particular (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011). In a world where private organisations have so much power, management scholars have started asking for considering their responsibility in resolving wicked problems (Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). From highlighting the conflicting responsibilities between caring for the work and caring for the

worker that people experience at the individual level, this research contributes raising the question of responsibility at the organisational level.

Liedtka (1996) was professing that 'Caring organizations will need to be as tough-minded and result-oriented as any other organization. It will be their methods and aspirations that distinguish them, not their lack of attention to outcomes. The values of mutual respect, honesty, and patience will be its foundation' (p.194). This vision is appealing. However, from the research presented here, it appears that the Gordian knot lies at the political level and thus leans toward Tronto's (1993) argument that 'an ethic of care relies upon a political commitment to value care and to reshape institutions to reflect that changed value' (p.178).

### **How to incur social change?**

Business and management scholarship has been criticised for not addressing social issues (Walsh, *et al.*, 2003) and being complicit in reproducing social inequalities by enhancing the social systems that create them (Fotaki and Prasad, 2014; Fotaki and Prasad, 2015; Marti and Scherer, 2016). Findings from this research allow raising the question of how to implement an ethics of care in organisations. I unveil how the instrumentality that pervades the workplace conflicts with the possibility to care for people at work. This research was concerned about the way ethical issues are constructed in the workplace but did not focus on how to incur social change at an organisational or institutional level. I would like to end this chapter by a few reflections on that important topic.

#### *Raising awareness*

I draw on Kant's ideas to inspire a way to progress, as he proposed the way of enlightenment: 'Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity' (Kant and Reiss, 1991, p.54). In this view, the multiplicity of individual progress can lead the way to achieve a general change. In this research, I highlight that there could be an ethical dilemma (Gordon, *et al.*, 2009) for people in work organisations between caring for the work and caring for the worker. This might be particularly salient for workers in organisations that have precisely the purpose of providing care (e.g. health care, social care).

The point here is to open up the possibility for ethical awareness (Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). Being aware of the ethical stance of an issue is a decisive first step to be able to tackle ethical issues. This is consistent with an ethics of care perspective that advocate for the recognition and address of needs for care in situation rather than the application of Universalist moral principles (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993).

However, this pleads for individual awareness that does not rest on the belief that intentionality and reflective choices are the only way to change institutions. It has been argued that changing institutions is also drawn by non-rational processes (Voronov and Vince, 2012).

### *Changing meaning*

People are constrained in the institution they live in and whether they can be agents of change is a debatable question (Battilana, 2006). It has been shown that individuals can creatively navigate different meanings (Voronov, *et al.*, 2013), however, if the questions stay at the level of the individual, then it seems that awareness is a condition for change. The capacity to apprehend a need for change is an important factor for enhancing change (Voronov and Yorks, 2015). Voronov & Vince (2012) have criticised a view of agency as rational choices, stressing the role of emotions to 'both reproducing and transforming the institutional order' (p.73). Thus, they open the path to the role of unconscious processes in the creation of meaning. This research has shown that scripts can stay under the level of consciousness, as ethical dilemmas can be rationalised to avoid anxiety.

An important contribution of this research is to unpack how ethical meaning is constructed. This is important to explain the scandals that happen regularly and on which business ethicists base their rationale for their research, such as the Pinto case in the 80's (Jackall, 1988; Gioia, 1992), Enron in the 2000's (Sims and Brinkmann, 2003; Greve, *et al.*, 2010), or the Wells Fargo massive bank accounts fraud (McGee, 2016). These scandals can be interpreted as the discrepancy between the ethical meanings that have been constructed inside and outside the organisation. Transforming the ethical meaning has been studied through the use of values (Gehman, *et al.*, 2013; Vaccaro and Palazzo, 2015; Levy, *et al.*, 2016), and framing (Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). The findings in this research lead to arguing that this research

endeavour would progress by considering the role of unconscious processes, in particular, the affects that circulate in the interplay between the individual and the group or organisation.

### *Reflections for research practices*

This research has also implications for academic researchers. The collective and affective processes that lead to construct meaning also took place in our profession. I want to argue here that we need to deconstruct these processes so as to make enlightened choices. Schwarz and colleagues (2017) have recently warned us about the way our research interests are constructed: ‘When researchers place OS [Organization Studies] community interests above their own in researching organisations, they risk pushing aside or repressing the subjectivity that is fundamental to the scientific ethos’ (p.78). Research is a social activity (Gergen, 1982), and that is why it is not so easy to be aware of our societal duties beyond our research community.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter presented the purpose of this research, i.e. contribution to theory and practice. To carve out a contribution to research on relationships at work (Dutton and Heaphy, 2003; Dutton and Ragins, 2007; Ferris, *et al.*, 2009; Stephens, *et al.*, 2011; Colbert, *et al.*, 2016), I have elaborated a typology of good work relationships. This typology features four types of good work relationships: courteous interactions, convivial relationships, supportive relationships, and friendships. This typology is underpinned by two competing aims of the relationships: caring for the work and caring for the person at work. I have chosen to elaborate a typology so as to provide several contributions. First, this typology provides a conceptual platform for enhancing exchanges between the different streams of research concerns by this empirical phenomenon (e.g. positive work relationships, social networks, leader-member exchanges). Today these different streams of research use the same terms, such as friendship, to account for different phenomena. Second, this typology illustrates how people construct the quality of relationships in the organisational context. The objectives of caring for the work and caring for the person at work interact and people develop relational strategies to serve

either of these objectives. Third, this typology advances research on caring organisations (Liedtka, 1996; Gittell and Douglass, 2012) by showcasing the problem of care allocation that individuals and organisations experience.

Moreover, the case of relationships at work provides an interesting case for the study of ethical issue construction at work. Under certain circumstances, individuals consider the ethical issue of conflicting responsibilities between caring for the work and caring for the other person at work. This research contributes to knowledge on ethical issues in organisations by unpacking the role of intuitive processes, especially affects (Sonenshein, 2007; Tenbrunsel and Smith-Crowe, 2008; Graham, *et al.*, 2011; Treviño, *et al.*, 2014). I address Dinh and Lord's (2013) assertion that 'attention to the dynamics of moral processing has been limited, and a more holistic understanding of these processes is needed to provide a comprehensive framework for theory and interventions' (p.380). I believe this research makes two contributions in this matter. First, while the sensemaking-intuitionist model of ethical issues at work features intuitive processes after the issue construction phase (Sonenshein, 2007), I find that affects play a critical role *a priori* the issue construction. I find that the ethical rationalisation (Fotaki and Hyde, 2015; de Klerk, 2017) does not only take place *a posteriori* to the judgment of the ethical issue but conditions the construction of the issue in the first place. Second, while ethical sensemaking has been shown to take place at the collective level through deliberation (Reinecke and Ansari, 2015), I extend this view by showing how the collective dimensions also play out implicitly in the sensemaking process, through the influence of shared understandings. Finally, I contribute to research on ethical framing (Tenbrunsel and Messick, 1999; Kouchaki, *et al.*, 2013) by recasting the phenomenon as the evolution of ethical (un)awareness.

The findings of the research allow raising questions for broader societal considerations. First, the conflict in responsibilities found at the individual level between organisational and personal objectives is not resolvable at the individual level and resonates with the political role of organisations in society (Scherer and Palazzo, 2011; Reinecke and Ansari, 2016). Second, the research triggers reflections for how to incur social change (Walsh, *et al.*, 2003). I reflect about the difficulty to raise awareness to ethical issues in practice

considering institutional constraints and finish by discussing this predicament to the case of academic researchers (Fotaki and Prasad, 2014).

### *Inspiration for future research*

Taking stock of this research project, there are several areas that I would recommend for future research endeavours. First, the phenomenon of care in organisations needs further empirical research to understand how to define care and how to foster care in organisations. This could be inquired through further qualitative inductive studies in different types of organisations, especially the ones proposing different frames for interactions, such as virtual work. Moreover, systematic comparisons between different organisations or groups might also be fruitful to understand care in organisations better, but the existing measures of caring climates do not apprehend the phenomenon that has been observed in this research. Another way to understand the phenomenon of care could rest in focusing on 'bad' relationships. While I have focused in this research on relationships that were considered positive by the participants, understanding the characteristics that people at work consider negative could provide an interesting contrast.

Second, to better understand ethics in organisations, I suggest unveiling the processes underlying the construction of meaning. For instance, the role of the macro-context in the construction of meaning in organisations would be a fruitful area of research. I propose in particular to look at the evolution of ethical awareness in relation to historical and political changes. Also, the construction of ethical issues still requires further research. The conceptual overlaps between rational/non-rational, conscious/unconscious, reflective/intuitive, and affective/emotional hinder the advancement of knowledge. Clarifying how each of these dimensions play a role in the construction of meaning would be critical to better understanding the phenomenon of organisational ethics. It would also allow sharpening the methodological tools for empirical investigations.

## Epilogue: if I had to do it all over again?

During the first months of the PhD, one of the Professors leading a course on The Practice of Social Research explained that the PhD research project was a learning journey. At the end of it, we were supposed to be able to say that if we had to start it all over again, we would do it differently. This might be true of any research project, but considering the shape of the learning curve, it is certainly true for the PhD research project. This project entailed framing an initial question, identifying the academic literature that addresses this question, elaborating on an appropriate methodology, going into the field and gathering empirical material, analysing the empirical material in iteration with the literature review, and at last, carving out the contribution to theory and practice. I recognise I could have done something different at each of these steps. In this epilogue, I discuss the alternatives that appear the most relevant once the project is finished.

*Within this epistemological and theoretical framework, I could have...*

...Spent more time in the field. One of the delicate questions that arise when doing inductive qualitative work is when do I stop (Reinecke, *et al.*, 2016)? I had a wealth of data, but once on the field, there were always new teams, situations, projects, jobs, and individuals that seemed interesting. I made choices. There is one choice, in particular, that might not have been the wiser. I think it would have been beneficial to the study to go to Comms for one or two more field visits in the Advertising department. There was one team there that welcomed me, and I interviewed a few people in this team, but I did not spend much time in observation in their offices or following one of their projects. At that time I felt drained emotionally and financially, and I was conscious that I had more than enough data for the PhD project. Hence, I decided to stop there. With hindsight, it would have provided me with the opportunity to claim three comparable cases at Comms, with a total of four cases when Serv is added. I could have analysed the data as a four cases comparison research design (Eisenhardt, 1989). It cannot be known whether such a research design would have yielded more interesting findings, but it

might have made it easier to convince reviewers of the rigour of the research design.

The choice of the cases for the research could also have provided fruitful alternatives. As I have explained in chapter 3, the two cases were supposed to be of similar sizes in my initial research design, but opportunities arose to study Serv that was much smaller. Comms represented around 600 employees, out of which I observed around 40 people regularly, while Serv was an entity of 11 to 13 people (depending on the period of observation). This difference in size did not hamper the qualitative analysis but was damageable to the quantitative analysis. I had initially planned to develop a significant quantitative part in the research project, but pursuing this plan would have required seeking access to other organisations. Hence, I could have either looked for another organisation than Serv or developed a survey in a second phase for a larger range of organisations. In the latter case, I would have had to proceed to less deep qualitative analysis, thematic analysis for instance, so as to save time for conducting a survey within the time frame of the PhD. A research design mixing qualitative and quantitative analysis could have yielded interesting results as well. I would have traded depth for more width (Leonard-Barton, 1990).

Similarly, the initial plan was to give more weight to films in the analysis. However, I quickly realised that it would have trumped the whole PhD project. It would have required a different kind of field access, hence, probably different research settings. It would also have required a specific method for analysis (Heath, *et al.*, 2010). Eventually, it would simply have been another research, one that could have advanced knowledge differently.

Regarding the analysis, I acknowledge I could have organised the four years so as to spend more time analysing the data. Another pitfall of theory-building studies is to know when enough rounds of analysis have been applied to the data. Analysing data to build theory, like good wine, refines over time. With hindsight, I think I should have started building theory earlier so as to have more time to refine it.

Moreover, another way to improve the quality of analysis would have been to create more opportunities to work in collaboration. On the second round of analysis, when it was time to make theories emerge from the data,

working in isolation was probably not the better way to proceed. The doctoral tradition in which this PhD project took place regards the PhD as a personal enterprise. I have been working in collaboration on parts of the data while writing papers, and I found the collaboration to be a powerful catalyst for the process of theory-building. For my future research projects, I hope I find a way to work in teams and enhance collaborative reflections.

Finally, I endeavoured to make this project interdisciplinary and to navigate the epistemological boundaries between objectivist and interpretative frameworks. I chose the manuscript format, as opposed to a three-paper thesis, for its flexibility and space to be creative in writing. However, I recognise the difficulty to enhance the initial interdisciplinary project in writing. For instance, I wanted to infuse the document with a storytelling tone. Following interpretivist critique, I aimed at avoiding the reconstruction in which scholars engage with while writing papers about the story of the research (Anteby, 2013). However, as I was writing, I realised how difficult it is to tell the story of the research while still giving a logical account leading to theoretical contribution. Only the final picture of what happened is interesting, despite there are many different trails, setbacks, and unexpected developments, all along the way. Academia focuses on the finished product, i.e. the theoretical contribution (Schwarz, *et al.*, 2017). All the other events, ideas, analyses, that do not fit into the story of the chosen theoretical contribution claimed in the research are not relevant, hence not interesting (Davis, 1971). I have sacrificed the realism in the story for a logical account of a theoretical contribution.

#### *What if?*

I have discussed a few alternatives within the same epistemological and theoretical framework. To conclude, I would like to reflect on wider alternative paths that could have been relevant to the study of the quality of relationships at work and the underlying ethical issues. Science is a social activity (Gergen, 1982), so I need to acknowledge for the social influences on this piece of research.

Regarding the theoretical frame, I reckon I could have chosen many others, leading to different research questions, different methodologies, and different contributions. One of the theoretical frames that seem most relevant

is institution theory (Powell and DiMaggio, 2012). This research could have drawn from institution theory to explain the phenomenon of recurrence of uncaring relationships at work. This perspective would lead to questioning how some people manage to enact care in organisations, and escape the institutional order (Battilana, 2006), and how non-rational processes explain for the change capabilities (Voronov and Vince, 2012). I am a psychologist by training, hence, institutional theory did not appeal to me. I also perceived the difficulty to carve out a contribution to a field that is already intensely researched. However, I reckon that the question of the dialectics between agency and structure (Battilana, 2006) could yield critical insights to tackle the individual reductionism that has tainted research on ethical behaviours (Parmar, 2014).

The research group I belonged to, along with my supervisors, value and practise qualitative research with a sensitivity to critical management studies. My supervisors never directly constrained my choices, however, I believe they strongly influenced the research. For instance, a member of the upgrade panel (end of the first year) asked me why I had planned to conduct a survey since qualitative data was more than enough. He could not see how questionnaires would contribute to the study. This occurred at a time when I was actively seeking access to organisations, so this comment weighed heavily on my decision to accept Serv's offer. As a result, I downplayed the quantitative part of my research design. Interestingly, one of my fellow PhD students, also trained in psychology, started at the same time with a similar initial research interest. At the start of the PhD, I was much more proficient with experimental design and statistical analysis than she was, while she was more proficient in writing and manipulating language than I. However, she belonged in a research group focusing on behavioural sciences. As a result, her thesis was entirely quantitative and based on experiments. Would such a quantitative methodology have been better to address the question of what makes people care for each other in work organisation? I cannot answer this question. However, I recognise that other paths would have been possible to address the original question.

Finally, I recognise that many choices that I have made during the research project, and that I continue to make today, pertain to an identity

question: what kind of scholar do I want to be? While I started this research project with a modest objective of knowledge contribution, I finish the project with an ambitious aim of critical transformation (Fotaki and Prasad, 2014). Hence, if I started the PhD now, I would probably adopt a more critical stance, which would impact the theoretical framework and the methodological approach. For instance, I could adopt an action research methodology (Ripamonti, *et al.*, 2016). I would design a research method that aims at improving the quality of life at work in a practical sense, rather than intently focusing on theoretical contribution.

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## Appendix A - Scenario for initiating interviews

### **Scenario 1:**

When he arrives at work in the morning Julien always makes an effort to greet the people he comes by, as required by politeness. However his job entitles him to responsibilities and he has very intense days. Consequently he doesn't take time to enquire about how people are, whether they are colleagues or subordinates. For him if people have problems they must handle things so that would not affect their job, and if problems are about work they should be able to resolve them by themselves professionally.

(Alternative version with Sophie)

### **Scenario 2:**

Edouard and Emmanuel work in the same team. As every Monday morning the team meets with the manager so as to take stock on the progress of each person's projects. On this day the discussion dwells on Emmanuel since obviously he is overwhelmed by the breadth of the project he deals with. After the meeting everybody moves back to his desk in the shared office. Emmanuel sighs ostensibly, and displays signs of nervousness; he drums frenetically on his computer. Edouard wonders whether he should offer him help for his project. But he changes his mind because he has himself quite a lot of work to do this week.

(Alternative version with Virginie and Laure)

## Appendix B - Interview schedule

1. General introduction through the examples of taking time for morning greetings and helping a colleague who does not cope with his/her work.  
**“What do you think people should do in these situations?”**
2. General understanding of the purpose of work relationships.  
**“According to you, what do you think is the appropriate way to behave with each other at work?”** (characteristics of relationships with co-workers, and role of the situation, the hierarchy, the pressure, on the appropriateness of these characteristics)

Expansion of the conversation from there, including:

- Exploring the interviewees’ background and how it shaped his/her views. **“What did you do before you joined Comms/Serv?”** (job, same or different sectors, number of years of experience, educational background). **“How well did you adapt when you first arrived?”** (difference in the way of working, particular difficulties, helped received)
- Exploring the interviewee’s current job and his/her relationships with his/her co-workers. **“I understand that you are doing..”** (tasks, collaborative/individual work, criteria for work quality assessment, social climate, culture at Comms/Serv and in your department, difficulties and pleasures, working hours)

## Appendix C - Questionnaire interactions at work

**Write the words that come immediately to your mind when one mentions THE WORK.**

Give 3 to 7 words, one for every line.

1<sup>st</sup> word (1)

2<sup>nd</sup> word (2)

3<sup>rd</sup> word (3)

4<sup>th</sup> word (4)

5<sup>th</sup> word (5)

6<sup>th</sup> word (6)

7<sup>th</sup> word (7)

**What is the best attitude towards others at work? Short scenarios are proposed to you, you have to rate each of them on a mark from 1 to 7, 1 being the worst, and 7 the best. No good or bad answers, only your impression!**

**[Random: Julien or Sophie]**

When he arrives at work in the morning Julien always makes an effort to greet the people he comes by, as required by politeness. However his job entitles him to responsibilities and he has very intense days. Consequently he doesn't take time to enquire about how people are, whether they are colleagues or subordinates. For him if people have problems they must handle things so that would not affect their job, and if problems are about work they should be able to resolve them by themselves professionally.

|  | 1-No,<br>absolutely<br>not (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5 (5)                 | 6 (6)                 | 7-Yes,<br>absolutely<br>(7) |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| According to you is Julien's attitude at work appropriate? (1) | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Do you think Julien is in general a good person? (2)           | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Most people behave like Julien at work (3)                     | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |

**[Random: Edouard/Emmanuel or Virginie/Laure]**

Edouard and Emmanuel work in the same team. As every Monday morning the team meets with the manager so as to take stock on the progress of each person's projects. On this day the discussion dwells on Emmanuel since obviously he is overwhelmed by the breadth of the project he deals with. After the meeting everybody moves back to his desk in the shared office. Emmanuel sighs ostensibly, and displays signs of nervousness; he drums frenetically on his computer. Edouard wonders whether he should offer him help for his project. But he changes his mind because he has himself quite a lot of work to do this week

|   | 1-No,<br>absolutely<br>not (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5 (5)                 | 6 (6)                 | 7-Yes,<br>absolutely<br>(7) |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| According to you is Edouard's attitude at work appropriate? (1) | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Do you think Edouard is in general a good person? (2)           | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Most people behave like Edouard at work (3)                     | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |

**[Random: Richard or Johanne]**

Richard attends a team project presentation meeting. He knows the project quite well then he brought his laptop and uses this time to treat his emails. He deems that he doesn't need to listen at this moment of the presentation.

|   | 1-No,<br>absolutely<br>not (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5 (5)                 | 6 (6)                 | 7-Yes,<br>absolutely<br>(7) |
|---|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| According to you is Richard's attitude at work appropriate? (1) | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Do you think Richard is in general a good person? (2)           | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Most people behave like Richard at work (3)                     | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |

**[Random: Clara/Lionel or Lionel/Clara]**

It is Clara's last day of work. For this occasion she brought some cakes and invites her team to have a get together. Lionel, her manager, excuse himself because he is expected in a meeting and can't stay any longer. Finally he won't have time to come by later and Clara will leave her job without a chance to greet him.

|  | 1-No,<br>absolutely<br>not (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5 (5)                 | 6 (6)                 | 7-Yes,<br>absolutely<br>(7) |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| According to you is Lionel's attitude at work appropriate? (1) | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Do you think Lionel is in general a good person? (2)           | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Most people behave like Lionel at work (3)                     | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |

**[Random: Orlando and Paul/Carine or Carine and Maria/Paul]**

Orlando and Paul have to work with Carine on an important project, but they have quickly evaluated that she was not good enough. Then they have decided to try including her as few as possible and to get going on their side. But as she insists to take part, they go to her manager to obtain that she leaves officially the project.

|  | 1-No,<br>absolutely<br>not (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5 (5)                 | 6 (6)                 | 7-Yes,<br>absolutely<br>(7) |
|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| According to you is Orlando's and Paul's attitude at work appropriate? (1) | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Do you think Orlando and Paul are in general good persons? (2)             | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |
| Most people behave like Orlando and Paul at work (3)                       | <input type="radio"/>          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>       |

Now some questions on the general climate in your company. On a scale from 1 to 5 do you agree with the following statements?

|   | 1-<br>Disagree<br>totally (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5-Agree<br>totally<br>(5) |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| What is best for everyone in the company is the major consideration here. (1)                           | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| What is best for everyone in the company is the major consideration here. (2)                           | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| Our major concern is always what is best for the other person. (3)                                      | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| In this company, people look out for each other's good. (4)   | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| In this company, it is expected that you will always do what is right for the customers and public. (5) | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| The most efficient way is always the right way in this company. (6)                                     | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |
| In this company, each person is expected above all to work efficiently. (7)                             | <input type="radio"/>         | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>     |

The following items refer to the way the manager of your service treats employees in your service. To what extent:

|   | 1- Disagree<br>totally (1) | 2 (2)                 | 3 (3)                 | 4 (4)                 | 5-Agree<br>totally (5) |
|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Has he / she treated you in a polite manner? (1)              | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |
| Has he / she treated you with dignity? (2)                    | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |
| Has he / she treated you with respect? (3)                    | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |
| Has he / she refrained from improper remarks or comments? (4) | <input type="radio"/>      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/>  |

**Thanks! It's almost done, you only have to indicate a few socio-demographic data that are used to control for the study validity:**

Are you:

- A man (1)
- A woman (2)

Which is your age bracket?

- Less than 25 years old (1)
- Between 25 and 29 years old (2)
- Between 30 and 34 years old (3)
- Between 35 and 39 years old (4)
- Between 40 and 44 years old (5)
- Between 45 and 49 years old (6)
- Between 50 and 54 years old (7)
- 55 years old or more (8)

How many years have you been working in your current organisation?

Which of this descriptive fits best with your current status in the organisation?

- Intern (1)
- Assistant (2)
- Employee (3)
- Executive (4)
- Manager (responsible for a team) (5)
- Top management (responsible for a team of managers) (6)
- Other, please give details (7) \_\_\_\_\_

In which department /unit do you work?

**Thank you very much for participating! If you have comments or questions, you can express them in the space below (and if you wish for a personalised answer, do not forget to give an email address!)**

## Appendix D - Participants information sheet



Le 23/07/2014

### Feuille d'information aux participants

Le projet de recherche que je conduis dans le cadre de ma thèse de doctorat (PhD) à la Warwick Business School porte sur les connections au travail, et en particulier sur le rôle du contexte organisationnel sur la compréhension de la 'bonne' façon de se comporter les uns avec les autres au travail.

Votre participation à cette étude terrain est tout à fait libre. C'est-à-dire que vous pouvez refuser de participer, ou vous retirer de l'étude à n'importe quel moment, sans que cela n'ait de conséquence ni pour vous ni pour votre entreprise.

La méthodologie d'étude employée implique une accumulation de données de différentes natures, dont de l'observation participante, des entretiens et des questionnaires. Vous pouvez accepter de participer à toutes ou seulement à certaines étapes.

Les données recueillies seront conservées dans un format anonyme (c'est-à-dire en particulier sans noms-prénoms), et seront utilisées exclusivement à des fins de recherche et d'enseignement. Les analyses issues de l'utilisation des données récoltées pourront faire l'objet de publications scientifiques (en particulier thèse, journaux scientifiques et actes de conférences).

Je reste à votre disposition pour répondre à vos questions sur le déroulement de l'étude ainsi que sur ses résultats :

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Alternativement vous pouvez également contacter mes Directeurs de thèse, Professeurs à la Warwick Business School, Marianna Fotaki ([marianna.fotaki@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:marianna.fotaki@wbs.ac.uk)) et Juliane Reinecke ([juliane.reinecke@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:juliane.reinecke@wbs.ac.uk)), ainsi que le Responsable Administratif de la recherche, Farat Ara ([Farat.Ara@wbs.ac.uk](mailto:Farat.Ara@wbs.ac.uk)).

# English translation

## Participants information sheet

The research project I am conducting for my doctoral thesis (PhD) at Warwick Business School deals with connections at work, and more precisely with the role of organizational context on the way people understand the 'good' way to behave with each other at work.

Your participations to this study is absolutely free. You can refuse to participate, or withdraw from the study at any time, without any consequences for you or your company.

The methodology adopted involves gathering data from different natures, including participant observation, interviews and questionnaires. You can accept to participate to all or only parts of these steps.

Collected data will be kept in an anonymous form (i.e. in particular without first and family names), and will be used exclusively for research and teaching. Analyses from these data might lead to scientific publications (in particular thesis, scientific journals and conference proceedings).

I remain available to answer your questions on the study proceedings and results.

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Alternatively, you can as well contact my supervisors, Professors at Warwick Business School, Marianna Fotaki (marianna.fotaki@wbs.ac.uk) et Juliane Reinecke (juliane.reinecke@wbs.ac.uk), or the administrative research officer, Farat Ara (Farat.Ara@wbs.ac.uk).

## Appendix E - Extract from a day of field notes at Comms

02/10/14

I arrive at 9.20, there is nobody from the Consulting team yet, except for François in Natacha's office. He looks almost disappointed when I tell him that I am not staying, only leaving my luggage in Natacha's office as usual but spending this day at PR Corporate. A few people from IBM team are there already.

I notice that people tend to say hello when encountering them in corridors at that time of the day, more than half an hour later.

At 9.25 I am the first one arriving on the Corporate bench.

Sophie has sent an email (or a chat?) to invite people over breakfast since she brought food (croissants) and drinks (fruit juices) to celebrate for the signature of her permanent contract ('CDI').

Somebody from another entity of PR arrives saying: "Oui je sais, je suis toujours le premier à arriver quand on parle de bouffe". So some people begin to get up but Sophie realises she hasn't any glasses and go get some. It is only a matter of minutes but it seems not acceptable to stand up waiting so people go back to their seats. Evelyne: "Bon attends, je termine mon truc", and Anne: "Ben moi aussi" and they go back to their seats.

When Sophie comes back they can get up again. She explains: "c'est mon deuxième jour de CDI, c'est la tradition". So many people are getting together around the press table in the end of the room. It is indeed a convivial moment. But it is also very quick, like 5 minutes. Moreover during these 5 minutes they are talking about work as well like a training day on oratorical art that a few of them took part in and are quite enthusiast about. But very quickly people begin to excuse themselves: "Bon, faut que j'aïlle retrouver X". And somebody else simple: "Allez, go." Apparently talking to herself but clearly it was understood as a collective command, because everybody splits immediately and in a moment it is over. I feel that people need to show that they don't have the time.

But other people come just after, saying a word to Sophie, the organiser, like: "Félicitations" and go help themselves with the food, then take a moment to talk about work.

During the getting together Sandra doesn't want anything, so stays at her desk despite it is very close to the location of the do. She will go to it after everybody is gone.

Chrystèle arrives a moment later because she had an appointment outside. So she comes to congratulate Sophie, even kisses her ('lui fait la bise') before she goes take a croissant.

Sophie talks to Jennifer while she is going across the room without stopping:

- Jennifer ?,
- Oui?,
- Il reste des croissants et des chouquettes si tu veux
- Merciiiiii !

Sarah, who is quite new in the company (she is still a freelancer right now but should sign an employment contract for January) asks the same question as I did about the post-its on the faces in the pictures on the wall.

I can see that the newly arrived try to connect with other people. For example when two people joke together the newly arrived try to connect. Somebody (not in PR) is working with Sandra at her desk and they see somebody from IT passing by so he says: "il arrive à 11h" and Sandra adds: "il est en retard, carton rouge", so Sarah sitting in the opposite desk, moves away from her screen so as to catch their glaze, smiling. When Sarah comes back from IT with her laptop, she comes to show it to Sandra, saying: "Je suis trop contente". Later I observe that Sarah is trying to bond with people on the tip of her toes: she replies to any personal comment, here she asks about the different avant-premières they are going to.

Jennifer tells about her: "Je suis très énervée parce que dès ce matin huit heures il n'y avait déjà plus de places pour l'avant première à laquelle je voulais aller". Anne is replying to her so as to show some interest.

When lunch time approaches I can see people leaving one by one. This is at odd with what most people said during interviews that they are one of the few department where people eat together. What marks the departure every time is "Bon appétit", meaning 'I don't eat with you for lunch'.

Enzo doesn't talk much with anybody, I am wondering why. It might be his understanding of the good way to behave at work (he is very, very young, and unexperienced).

I can see Natacha on the other side of the room, on the Social bench, working with Rona. They are quite far away but as it is so quiet now I can almost hear what they are saying.

During lunch with Sandra I ask her if it is not too annoying to have me sitting there. She replies that she forgets about me. I suppose I am less used to open-space offices than they are. The colleague that joins us for lunch in the Atrium has written a book on people who decide not to have children (“pas d’enfants: un choix). She almost apologizes for not being a journalist anymore.

When I come back from lunch Sarah chats with me, I feel that she is happy to have somebody to talk to because she has just arrived in the company.

I was supposed to have an appointment with Clarisse, the manager of the team at 2.30pm and I checked it with her this morning but at 2.45 she is not there yet, I fear that it is not going to happen.

Anne, Enzo and Sarah go meet in the atrium, I would like to be invited but I am not. Maybe they don’t think that I could be interested in it.

Several persons are wearing a headphone with a microphone to be more comfortable when they have to call on the phone.

Sophie takes Sandra’s call for the second time because she is not at her desk. So the second time she picks up saying “Devine qui c’est ?” joking because the same person again tries to get in touch with Sandra who came back in between but left again.

Chrystèle, waving a sheet of paper for Matheo’s attention, “C’est plus urgent que. . .” and then “tu sais pourquoi ? Parce que. . .”. Basically she is lecturing him.

Jennifer asks Sophie for her opinion on an English expression. So Sophie searches on the web and answers her, saying that she also sends the answer to her by chat.

3.10 Clarisse is not back yet. I suppose this department deals a lot with urgent matters.

Here I feel that the higher people are in the hierarchy the more they are free to choose their timetable: an intern discovers a few minutes before that he is going at a meeting (as Natacha’s expression: “il n’a pas de visibilité sur son emploi du temps”) whereas a manager decides to skip an appointment without any warning.

From the Corporate bench we can see Richard’s office through glass walls. Naturally he sees many people in his office and usually they are sitting in the red sofas (as in Brigitte’s office).

When Clarisse finally comes back she immediately apologizes to me and offers to take another appointment for next week. And this time she takes my phone number so as to be able to reach me in case she can’t make it again. She apologizes many times.

I have an appointment with Evelyne for the interview but she told me she would rather do it when Chrystèle (her internship tutor, same age as her) leaves for a meeting. It seems that she is walking on eggshells. She told me her strategy justifying it because Chrystèle is a bit so-so (doing the gesture with her hand). When the time of the interview approaches she comes to me and asks me very quietly if we can do rather 4pm. And when I come to see her at 4pm she has me waiting a few minutes: "Je finis ça. 5 mn". I suppose it looks good to be busy. I am also wondering how bad it looks to go to interview with me.

Anne to Sarah, quite enthusiastically: "Sans blague, t'as un diplôme de secouriste, c'est genial !"

With the chat discussions arise that I don't know about. For example Sophie says suddenly: "je crois que je vais peut-être aller faire un tour au brand. . . pour récupérer du chocolat !". Everybody seems to know what is it about (except for me).

Anne about an enquirement from Matheo: "Situation under control Matheo".

On the wall behind me there is a place for postcards that people from the department sent.

## Method

I feel that Matheo is avoiding me, but I don't want to ask him again for an interview, I don't feel it right to push people. On the other side I am wondering if it is not a subsequent bias in my study to meet only the people who are rather enthusiastic about it.

This is my last day at PR Corporate and I am wondering if there is some disappointment when I leave them for another department.

The only way to be invited to meetings is to show some interest in the topic. They know what my research topic is, and that it has not much to do with their work per se and though it feels natural for them to invite me if I know the project, it doesn't if I don't.

In PR Corporate, sitting on a remote table, and not participating to any work meeting, I feel like a spy.

I am naturally discreet, I know how not to draw attention on me. For example I rather go talk to people on the bench when other people are occupied talking or calling so that they would not give much attention to my intervention.

## Walking around with François

François had invited me to come along to a meeting with creative people in the morning so I go back to Natacha's office to meet him. We go but then François realises that we are a bit early and he can't take the risk of arriving early so we wander a bit in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. We go to the Production unity where we come across people in disguise: especially women with fake huge blond hair and a crown, which feels really weird. Later Natacha will explain to me that they are repeating for a video show they are filming for Sixtine leaving party in the evening. They are replaying 'Libérez, délivrez' which is the French version of the 'Let it go' song from the Walt Disney movie Frozen. François tells me: "Mais c'est plutôt eux qui avaient l'air surpris de nous voir, c'est ça qui est drôle". It is sure an expression of his uneasiness at the moment.

Then we head towards the office of the Creations Director, but it is still early, when we enter the corridor where the office is it appears that the office is already crowded so François doesn't feel like disturbing them. So he decides to try to call first. So we take the closest stairs and go back to Natacha's office. But when he tries to call, nobody answers, so he understands that he is being screened out. I tell him that maybe he just put his phone on a mute mode while he is in a meeting. I am trying to make him feel better although I would not be surprised that he is being screened out. Indeed he is of a very low status, has trouble to fit in, and has to enquire about the progression of a job that they asked them to do. But I can see that he is hesitating, he doesn't really know what to do. It is obvious that he has trouble to make sense of the right interactional behaviour in the situation.

We notice in the other side of the huge atrium a poster on the glass wall indicating: "Faim" with a phone number. So we are laughing looking at it, so that the guy in the corresponding office stands up, waves and laughs.

There is a leaving get together in the atrium, with food and drinks. François doesn't know who it is so he doesn't want to go. Also I notice that anybody going there would be seen by many people around. The Atrium is definitely not a private place (as many people will emphasize during the interview).

At the IBM bench they are always and almost exclusively talking in English.

#### Finishing the day in Natacha's office:

In the office nearby many people from the IBM team are gathered and singing "happy birthday", it makes us laugh because it is both nice and bizarre. They will stay a long time celebrating (at least 30mn) except for a few of them who go back to their desks fairly quickly.

Natacha tells me about the things she is worrying about: they are overloaded with work and Paul may be leaving for an eight-months mission in China. This is the worst

moment because she will take her maternity leave in this period and he is the only person experienced in her consulting team (because Pierre is not really working on consulting mission) and she is not happy with François so far, and Joséphine finishes her short-term contract soon (because she was not deemed appropriate for this job, as she agrees with herself, as I have been told by everybody). So she is wondering how she will be able to finance her salary on Consulting missions I nobody's there to effectively gain and produce missions. She has to legitimize her job all the time through financial accounts.

Natacha is in a poor mood this week. Reading an email at her desk she complains: "nan mais elle est bête ou quoi ?" and sighs loudly. And in a private discussion in the corridor she tells me she is very demotivated. But I'm not sure that other people can notice she is in this mood really.

Natacha is snowed under but she still takes time to discuss about Google with François (and despite she doesn't enjoy working with him).

Later Natacha complains again: "J'espère que ça va pas tout effacer, j'en peux plus moi de ce truc". Then she laughs and says: "Tu vas sortir de cette étude avec une bien mauvaise image de ton ancienne amie".

Then Luc, from PR brand, comes in the office to discuss the Google project. So Natacha introduces me and hooks me up for interview. He answers that he is interested but not sure he would be available next week because he is very busy.

François shows the drawings created by the creative people for the project and he reads all the text to Luc, it is a bit painful. Natacha stays on her desk while they discuss the ideas then says: "pardon, j'ai pas bien entendu" and stands up to take a closer look. As usual Natacha takes the opinion of the other people: "donc toi tu trouves que c'est pas dérangeant de partir sur un faux exemple?". Luc: "Oui". The fake/authentic discussion is about an example of Google allowing a French SME to succeed in the other side of the planet.

Then Natacha goes back at her desk because she is doing both activities at the same time.

François opposes to Natacha about the opportunity to use a book: "si, si, je t'assure. . . ah non, si, c'est dedans". It is embarrassing that he keeps arguing while she has a status far higher than his (her boss, experienced in the company, with a broadly recognized expertise). Embarrassment from face work?

When Luc asks some questions, sometimes Natacha answers to them whereas she is still working at her desk on another topic at the same time, I'm wondering to what extent it shows how ignorant François is.

Luc, very enthusiastic about an idea that comes from the 'Créa': "C'est genial, je m'étonne qu'ils ne l'ont pas déjà fait. Il doit y avoir quelque chose derrière." They are supposed to work on the communication, brand image, public perception, but actually some ideas they have might change more deeply the market strategy of the company they are counselling. In this case they are talking about the way Google could add value to the job offers advertisement business.

Natacha apologizes for not taking real part in the meeting: "Désolée, je réponde à un appel d'offre en parallèle, je vous écoute". Luc welcomes his apologies laughing: "OK, je comprends", and Natacha adds, laughing as well: "je suis pas malpolie!". Still doing different tasks at the same time she asks them (trying to reach a conclusion): "avec la japonaise, est-ce que ça marche?". But at the same time she picks up her phone to call Joséphine: "On se voit ?", and Joséphine comes running in the next minute. So then there are two different meetings at the same time in the same office. I'm wondering if Natacha's apologies didn't allow her to raise the level of rudeness. Then with Joséphine she picks up the phone to call somebody else: "On ne te derange pas ?" the interlocutor is laughing when he says "non" so we understand it rather means 'yes' but Natacha continues anyway. The exchanges in this meetings are very friendly despite it is for a call that they have to turn in the following day and there is a significant pressure about it (ADP second part).

Later Natacha says, laughing: "on est hyper efficaces, j'adore!". She is very happy because she can see the end coming.

In the end of the day before leaving I come by to PR again and I can see that Sophie and somebody else I don't know are smoking in the small court yard where it is officially forbidden to smoke.

### Method

Even when I am not 'invited' to meetings, like the one about google where I just happened to be in Natacha's office when it happened, it would feel weird to leave before it is over. That is participation I guess, people are feeling that I am part of it and if I am leaving (without giving a good excuse) it might feel light I don't care about it, and if I don't care what am I doing here then?

Ideally it would be great to be able to debrief about my day with somebody, like a mentor, everyday. I would help me extract an overall impression of my day, beyond the single small things I make notes of.

In the overall the kind of jobs they do, the context, allows me to take notes quite easily since people are writing things all the time when they work. But there are some instances where it can be awkward, it is actually when people are not really working like during the get together in PR in the morning. I actually stayed seated on

the table next to the buffet because I didn't want to draw attention on me, especially because not everybody who came knew about me. But still I participated by having a drink and talking to some people so it would have been weird to take notes at this moment, it would have highlighted that I am not part of it, and then if I am not part of it, one can wonder again what I am doing there.

I feel that without Natacha I would go nowhere because I have chosen a non-participative position so my place is never guaranteed anywhere. Participating more directly would make things easier and I wouldn't need so much such a door opener as Natacha.

Filming: I had opportunities to film in Natacha's desk because it is a defined space, almost private on some features, as opposed to the open space which is a public space and it would have made it much more difficult. Again the public-private continuum.

## Appendix F - Extracts of notes from video recording

### at Serv

Team meeting on the 23rd of March 2015. From 5 minutes and 55 seconds to 13 minutes 52 seconds into the video recording.

| Time span              | Content  |
|------------------------|--|
| 5:55,1<br>-<br>6:49,5  | Christine proposes to start: she has two mediatized visits: "c'est pour Child, il est trop mignon" [it's for Child, he is too cute] and people laugh as it is not really a professional evaluation. "ça me fait... j'ai même pas envie de le prêter". [it makes me... I don't even want to lend him] But she needs people to do the mediatized visits. Two people volunteer quickly so they can move on: "ben merci les filles". [then thank you girls]  |
| 6:49,5<br>-<br>8:26,6  | Léa has a point on a study day (journée d'études) and Gilles says that the speaker is very interesting, it is on sectarian risks. Christine says she already did a training on this, but Gilles says it is rather a colloquium and "le maximum qui puissent y aller c'est bien" [the maximum of persons who can go it's good] and "donc voilà vous l'avez par mail, si vous voulez vous inscrire vous avez le bulletin d'inscription, moi je vous invite à y aller parce que c'est vraiment quelqu'un d'intéressant, donc on fera le point de savoir combien on est à y aller pour savoir qui reste. Moi éventuellement je...je connais, j'ai déjà entendu, je peux rester mais sinon je viendrai si c'est possible. Donc on se redit ça dans un mois quoi." [So here we go, you have the email, so if you want to register you have the registration form, I invite you to go because it is really something interesting, so we will come back to it to know how many of us are going to know who stays. Potentially I ... I know about it, I already heard, I can stay but otherwise I will come if it is possible. So we come back to it in a month then] and Léa: "et du coup on a dit qu'on ferait la réunion le jeudi..." [and so we said that we would do the meeting on the Thursday...] |
| 8:26,6<br>-<br>13:52,7 | Gilles asks, laughing, if somebody wants to go to a meeting with him on the 15th of April. It is to prepare for highlighting an action they did: meeting with parents, which is considered innovative. Gilles: "donc je voudrais que l'une d'entre vous m'accompagne, ou j'eu voulu que l'une d'entre vous m'accompagnat, au choix". [so I would like that one of you comes with me, or I would have liked that one of you came with me, as you wish]. People still talk around but it is not possible to understand on the recording because they talk to low, meaning to talk to a neighbour only, as opposed to Gilles who addresses the whole table.<br>Nobody volunteers so Gilles proposes to leave them another week to decide but somebody: "nan mais moi j'y vais pas, hein" [no but I won't go, eh]. They don't feel like doing this sort of things that is quite different from their usual job and requires talking to important people or in front of an audience. As Nathalie  |

starts to mention something on the topic several persons pushes her to volunteer: "c'est bien un psychologue !", [a psychologist, it's great!]"c'est vachement bien". [it's really great !] She defends herself: "va falloir que je trouve quelqu'un pour garder mes enfants." [I will have to find somebody to look after my children] and Gilles replies: "tu peux les emmener" [you can take them with you] (joking) Christine replies: "ah ben moi je veux bien aller les garder" [oh so I am happy to go look after them] and everybody laugh. Other jokes burst out.

Gilles: "Attendez, si Nathalie et moi on y va, et que...et qu'on est retenus pour le 25 juin, là faudra y aller, hein le 25 juin parce qu'on va pas se ridiculiser à pas y aller...voilà." [Wait a minute, if Nathalie and I are going and that... And that we are selected for the 25th of june, this time you will have to go, eh, the 25<sup>th</sup> of June because we are not going to make fools of ourselves and not go... that's it.] But they panic about talking in public. Alexia: "moi je me sens pas du tout de parler... moi franchement parler devant une assemblée là...nan, nan, moi c'est pas mon truc". [I really don't feel like talking... honestly talking in front of an assembly there.... No, no, that's not my thing]. They all try to drop this thing that is too much pressure for them. But at the same time they are proud of valorising their work.

In the end Nathalie is going. So Alexia: "merci Nathalie" [thanks Nathalie] and "t'as le droit de dire nan" [you are allowed to say no], being serious now. They still talk about it: what is the point, what they are going to talk about.

## Appendix G – Maelle’s interview transcript

Maelle was a social worker at Serv. The interview is first presented in the original version in French (pp. 266-280), followed by a translation in English (pp.281-295).

Entretien le 23 Septembre à 16h20.

Ben écoute comme ça spontanément je répondrais que l’attitude de Sophie oui elle est appropriée, que c’est par le... que le travail c’est pas l’endroit pour... Pour voilà, pour échanger autour de nos problèmes personnels donc

*Sur un à sept tu lui mettrais une note de combien ?*

Sur un a sept ? [. . .] Cinq.

*D’accord.*

Voilà alors comme ça je te dis c’est ma réponse un peu spontanée. . .

*Mmm*

Que sa réaction elle est appropriée et puis que quand t’es au travail voilà c’est pas le lieu pour déverser tes problèmes tout ça. Après si je me replace moi dans mon contexte de travail je sais que. . . il peut m’arriver d’échanger avec les collègues autour de situations des fois complexes de nos vies privées. Donc. . . donc voilà je pense que peut-être c’est lié au fait que notre équipe se soit une petite équipe où on a des relations de confiance et où du coup en plus on travaille avec l’humain et si nous on traverse des choses compliquées dans notre vie familiale, notre vie privée, je pense que. . . on a besoin de déverser, c’est pas le lieu parce que voilà il y a des autres lieux pour aller déverser nos problèmes personnels, mais ça peut entraver notre travail. Donc du coup peut-être que des fois cinq minutes le matin si la collègue elle a une mine défaite parce qu’elle vient de rencontrer une situation un peu compliquée avec son enfant enfin etc. ou une dispute avec son mari n’importe, si elle a besoin de le déverser je l’écouterai. Parce que ben parce que peut-être ça va lui permettre de passer une meilleure journée et que peut-être elle sera plus efficace au travail donc j’ai du mal à avoir une attitude tranchée. A dire que oui c’est le travail donc on n’a pas du tout de place pour échanger autour de nos vies privées. En même temps voilà là je te citais un exemple d’une situation où j’écouterais ma collègue si je la vois arriver le matin avec une mine défaite et quand je lui pose une question si elle me répond, je vais pas dire j’ai plein de. . . j’ai plein de synthèse ou n’importe je vais prendre le temps.

*D’accord*

Surtout dans notre travail avec l'humain, je crois que. .. ouais c'est...

*Pourquoi ?*

Ben . . . ben parce que si nous on est polluées par nos situations personnelles compliquées, je vais te donner une expression que j'ai entendue en formation et puis que je trouve assez révélatrice : si nos tuyaux sont débouchés [rires] nan mais c'est pas très beau mais c'est une psy qui avait employé ça, si nos tuyaux sont débouchés voilà si on est libre à l'intérieur, si on a pu évacuer tout ce qui est compliqué en nous, du coup la personne en face se sentira à l'aise et pourra elle aussi, la personne dans le cadre de notre travail hein, la personne qu'on reçoit parents enfants, pourra elle aussi parler librement de ses problèmes, de ce qu'elle ressent, de ce qu'elle vit, plutôt que si on est pris dans des situations compliquées si on n'a pas pu s'en libérer, je crois que du coup notre écoute elle est de moins bonne qualité. Donc peut-être qu'on peut rendre service aussi à des collègues mais c'est dans des situations ponctuelles, brèves, voilà, après si ça prend d'autres proportions on orientera la collègue vers . . . oui vers un thérapeute ou vers quelqu'un d'autre. Mais tu vois je réagis par rapport à ça parce que j'ai vécu donc ici au travail mais pas au sein de l'équipe de Serv avec une personne qui était extérieure, qui travaillait dans le cadre du CMS, qui a vécu un décès, le décès de son mari, et du coup qui. .. ouais qui a vécu une période de dépression suite au décès et puis qui venait au travail vraiment voilà avec le paquet sur le dos et qui ne pouvait pas faire la part des choses, qui déversait comme ça naturellement sans qu'on lui pose une question, elle venait vers nous, elle s'asseyait et puis elle parlait, elle parlait, elle parlait, de. . . voilà de ce qu'elle a vécu qui est super dur, qu'elle peut pas faire face. Donc moi plusieurs fois elle est venue en face de moi au bureau j'ai pas dit, elle s'appelait... Micheline, j'ai pas dit, ben j'ai du travail, j'ai du travail je peux pas t'écouter, j'ai pu lui dire mais au bout de peut-être une demi-heure trois quarts d'heure à l'avoir écouté sur sa vie personnelle, peut-être que ce serait important que tu puisses voir un professionnel voilà que tu puisses te confier à quelqu'un d'autre mais j'ai pas pu mettre une barrière directe en disant là. . . là c'est pas le bon lieu. J'ai pas pu me positionner comme ça.

*Ouais c'est pas évident.*

5'40

Nan. Ben nan c'était... Ouais il y avait quelque chose d'inhumain. Enfin je voilà je la connais depuis dix ans, je travaille ici depuis dix ans, je la croise tous les matins donc évidemment on est dans le cadre du travail et tout mais... Mais c'était pas possible pour moi quoi je trouvais que... Ouais ben voilà je me suis sentie... Je dirais même pas obligée parce que du coup, du coup j'ai eu l'impression d'être . . . d'être aidante pour elle à ce moment-là, elle avait besoin de parler dont j'étais disponible pour elle donc je l'ai écoutée de façon naturelle. C'est rigolo [rires] parce que quand je te le te parle

je me dis donc ma réponse première comme ça spontanée c'est l'attitude de . . . Je sais plus là Sophie elle est complètement adaptée et quand je te donne des exemples j'ai l'impression que . . .ce serait un petit peu différent.

*C'est peut-être la différence entre la réalité et. . .*

Oui

*Ce qui devrait être.*

Oui tout à fait, tout à fait.

*Deuxième petit scénario...*

[...]

Ben non moi je comprends pas le comportement de Virginie.

*Tu lui mettrais quoi comme note entre un et sept ?*

Je lui mettrais trois. [. . .] Je pense que. . . que une équipe voilà y a quand même de la solidarité y a quand même une entraide et puis que l'efficacité au travail, ben comme je te l'ai dit tout à l'heure c'est aussi en rapport avec comment on est épanoui dans notre vie personnelle enfin dans nos... Et que du coup entre collègues l'entraide ça doit exister. Et nous au niveau de notre service ça existe beaucoup on peut se reposer quand même les uns sur les autres. Si. . . après peut-être que les entreprises privées où il y a du rendement, tu vois l'usine tout ça c'est peut-être différent de nos services où on est dans l'humain, on est dans le social, on n'a pas comment dire des résultats chiffrés à rendre donc peut-être que ça aussi ça diffère donc nous dans nos services je pense que voilà l'entraide elle existe et puis que si j'ai une collègue en face de moi qui . . .qui est pas bien je vais pas retourner à mon travail non. Mais je crois qu'il y a vraiment un écart entre le privé, le. . . le secteur oui nous le secteur tertiaire et puis... Ouais les usines où on demande du rendement, où on demande vraiment.. C'est vrai que nous on a cette chance de pouvoir voilà aller boire un café si le matin on sent qu'il y a une collègue qui est pas bien et puis qui a besoin de déverser des choses et oui je le redis moi je pense que le rendement... L'avancée au travail, l'efficacité au travail, c'est aussi lié à l'épanouissement personnel et puis comment on est dans nos vies c'est un tout. Donc si... Voilà si t'es complètement déprimé par ta situation familiale je pense que ça va pas aller au travail et que... Que du coup voilà entre collègues on doit aussi veiller à ce que l'autre et ben il soit quand même, voilà, il soit quand même bien. Enfin si on voit qu'il y a quelque chose du qui va pas on... Moi je me sens le devoir de demander à l'autre ce qu'il a . . .et puis voilà de savoir comment je peux l'aider tout ça, je pense qu'on n'est pas . . . on n'est pas des robots

*Ça arrive ?*

. . . on n'est pas des robots

*Ça arrive, ouais ?*

De. . . Ben oui souvent. Oui souvent entre collègues... Après comment dire. .. Oui c'est vrai que c'est pas forcément peut-être les bons... Les bons lieux parce que ça pourrait être sur des temps le soir où on dit on va boire un coup ensemble si on a vu que la collègue était pas bien et tout mais non ça arrive sur notre lieu de travail pendant... Pendant nos huit heures enfin je pense que tu as déjà dû le remarquer [rires] on peut avoir des temps, oui où on échange...

10'28

*Ça fait combien de temps toi déjà que tu es ici ?*

Alors à Serv ça fait huit ans et puis ça fait dix ans que je suis dans ces locaux parce qu'avant j'étais au CMS.

*Ah oui d'accord. Tu connais particulièrement. . .*

Voilà donc du coup c'est pour ça que je connais, je connais l'équipe, le CMS et que du coup ben c'est pareil, oui il peut y avoir des temps d'échanges aussi avec les collègues du CMS.

*D'accord donc t'étais assistante sociale au CMS.*

Mmmm, pendant deux ans.

*Pendant deux ans et après t'es arrivée à Serv.*

Ouais, ouais, ouais, c'est ça.

*D'accord.*

J'avais passé le concours et puis du coup il y avait un poste à Serv pour être titulaire donc...

*D'accord.*

Et oui ça je pense oui ça pareil ça peut peut-être t'intéresser, j'ai trouvé un écart énorme entre le CMS et Serv en termes de... De temps où on, de temps passé à parler de nos situations personnelles.

*Ah ouais ?*

Oui j'ai trouvé qu'au CMS il y avait... C'est un travail qui est complètement différent donc j'ai fait les deux donc voilà je peux comparer. C'est pas la même charge de travail, c'est pas la même pression. C'est pas les mêmes choses qui sont en jeu

puisque tu accompagnes des adultes. A Serv on accompagne des enfants donc on est envahi d'autres responsabilités, voilà d'autres charges de travail et du coup j'avais beaucoup plus de temps au CMS pour parler de situations, personnelles, ou de situations qui étaient complètement en dehors du travail. Des trucs, enfin voilà que j'ai jamais vu à Serv mais des temps où on essayait des habits voilà. Bon, c'était il y a dix ans donc peut-être que le contexte il est aussi différent aujourd'hui mais en tous les cas quand je suis arrivée il y avait vraiment... Beaucoup plus de temps qu'à Serv où on pouvait parler d'autre chose que le travail.

*C'est vrai qu'ici en fait, enfin à erv je veux dire, il y a pas... Déjà les gens sont beaucoup en déplacement il y a pas de temps spécifique de convivialité...*

Non, de temps d'un café commun ou. . .

*Ouais.*

Et oui moi tu vois la... La rentrée je vais dire c'est pas que j'en ai souffert mais j'ai dit aux filles comme ça en rigolant 'Oh là là j'ai même pas eu le temps de vous raconter la rentrée de mes enfants'. Parce que... ben parce que on va on vient et... Et puis ouais on n'a pas forcément. . . ben de lieu déjà, tu vois dans les bureaux comme ça on se croise mais...

*Mmm*

Donc je trouve l'équipe vraiment conviviale, de confiance. Mais on a une telle charge de travail. . . ben qu'on n'a pas beaucoup de temps, pour échanger autour de nos situations personnelles. Et j'ai, j'ai vraiment trouvé la différence en basculant de service, oh les premiers moi j'ai dit mais c'est possible j'ai jamais dit un mot de ma vie privée alors que j'avais l'impression qu'au CMS il y avait beaucoup plus de temps. Alors au début j'ai réagi comme ça après j'ai trouvé que c'était pas forcément négatif. Ben parce que... Voilà c'était peut-être pas, c'était peut-être pas le bon lieu non plus mais... Mais oui je pense que c'est spécifique à l'équipe de Serv. Vraiment... Oui la secrétaire elle a fait l'autre fois la réflexion, Léa donc elle est arrivée il y a pas très longtemps, elle dit je connais rien de votre vie... A toutes, aux éducateurs tout ça on passe au secrétariat et je sais pas si vous avez des enfants si...et. . .

*Ouais parce que le temps d'échanges comme ça, ça va être le midi quoi.*

Alors peut-être et du coup moi je l'ai pas parce que je mange pas avec les collègues, c'est un choix. Je mange pas avec les collègues parce que je veux finir plus tôt le soir donc... Donc voilà le midi je prends un quart d'heure et je travaille parce que j'ai pas envie de finir...

*Ah oui tu travailles le midi en fait tu fais pas de pause quoi tu vas te chercher un...*

Ben soit je m'amène et puis je mange en, tu vois, en un quart d'heure vingt minutes à la cafétéria et puis après je sais que tu vois les collègues elles sont là jusqu'à six heures et demie sept heures mais moi j'ai pas à ce rythme-là parce que j'ai des petits et parce que j'ai envie de rentrer plus tôt... Plus tôt à la maison et que voilà que le travail soit fait [rires]. Donc je sais que si je prends une heure et demie le midi ben je vais finir plus tard le soir. Mais peut-être que oui. C'est vrai que ce temps de convivialité il a peut-être lieu le midi.

*Je te dis ça parce que aussi les secrétaires ne participent pas non plus à ce... Elles vont pas, enfin de ce que j'ai vu elles vont pas manger non plus manger à l'extérieur. Donc du coup. . .*

Ouais. Alors après il y a le choix ben je te dis au niveau de mon organisation personnelle et puis il y a aussi le choix ben financier moi personnellement j'ai pas du tout les moyens de manger au resto et puis pareil voilà je me dis j'aime mieux garder les tickets restaurant pour aller après le week-end avec mon mari enfin tu vois c'est vraiment des choix de vie. Mais peut-être que oui il y a un moment de convivialité le midi... Qui peut se, ouais se perdre...enfin voilà.

*Mais c'est vrai qu'il n'y a pas de temps... Il y a pas de café. C'est comme l'arrivée le matin il y a pas vraiment de... On sait pas trop si les gens sont là ou sont pas là on fait pas forcément le tour des bureaux.*

Nan, nan, nan, nan, nan, nan. Ouais. Alors en fait. . .

*Comme ce matin avec Arlette, par exemple, enfin on savait pas qu'elle était là.*

Ah ben oui c'est vrai [rires]. Ah oui, oui, oui, ben tu vois moi je m'en suis un peu mordue les doigts parce que c'est vrai que aller dire Bonjour au secrétariat avant d'aller dans le bureau à Gilles... Voilà j'étais arrivée à neuf heures pile donc j'ai pas le temps mais je me suis dit ouais ça c'est pas non plus... C'est pas cool quoi. Tu vois, passer par le secrétariat et après aller dans le... Ouais c'est assez individuel Serv hein. On est un peu dans notre... Dans nos, si on peut les appeler nos situations, voilà les enfants qu'on suit donc on a quand même des temps de regroupement le mardi et le jeudi mais sinon on est en électron libre. On fait nos... Nos visites, notre emploi du temps.

*D'accord... Et... Par rapport justement à la culture, est-ce que déjà tu sens une culture conseil général parce que toi tu étais au CMS avant, est-ce qu'il y a une culture conseil général ou... Ça se ressent pas spécialement ?*

Ben je dirais même peut-être une culture fonction publique ou... Voilà on n'a quand même la possibilité d'aller boire plusieurs cafés par jour. Enfin tu vois en

comparaison, tu vois mon mari il est dans le privé, et j'ai quand même beaucoup plus de possibilités que lui d'aller prendre un petit café...

*Il travail où ?*

Chez R dans une usine de pièces de voitures.

*D'accord.*

Donc...

*Donc lui il est sur un temps...*

Voilà tu vois c'est, c'est décompté, il doit même pointer je crois. Pointer pour aller aux toilettes [rires] pointer pour aller au café. Donc je dirais que la culture fonction publique, c'est... Ouais si t'as envie d'aller boire un café tu vas boire un café. Moi c'est... Pour moi c'est quand même une chance dans notre travail de... voilà d'avoir ces temps d'échange avec des collègues, oui si, si t'arrives un matin et que t'es pas très en forme t'as quand même la possibilité de l'exprimer à quelqu'un, t'as toujours une écoute, une oreille attentive, t'as toujours un sourire t'as toujours quelqu'un qui te reconforte et c'est pas l'autre en face elle va vite mettre le nez dans son dossier... nan je trouve voilà qu'on a cette chance.

17'54

*Et ça c'est conseil général pour toi c'est pas spécialement...*

Oui, oui, oui, oui. Je pense que... C'est dans tous les services du conseil général où on a cette possibilité... Ouais d'avoir... d'avoir des temps, des temps de convivialité peut-être un peu plus fréquent... Oui t'as peut-être pas trop observé ça mais dans la journée on peut quand même s'éclipser, aller boire un café avec une collègue ou... Et peut-être que voilà, enfin c'est pas peut-être dans une usine voilà ils ont pas la possibilité de faire ça.

*Et tu dirais qu'il y a une culture Serv ?*

Et ben la culture Serv je dirais que c'est beaucoup de boulot. Enfin que c'est le... c'est... Je sais pas comment te dire ça je vais pas te dire que les autres elles travaillent pas mais... Ouais enfin que le travail ça prend quand même... C'est normal on est au travail [rires], ça prend énormément de place, que ça nous met la pression. Oui j'ai l'impression d'être quand même plus stressée qu'une collègue qui est au CMS oui. Et puis c'est pas qu'une impression puisque j'ai travaillé au CMS donc j'ai pu le vivre et j'ai des copines qui travaillent au CMS et avec qui j'en échange régulièrement et il n'y a pas photo, il n'y a pas photo on a beaucoup plus de pression, on a une charge de travail qui est beaucoup plus importante, on a des horaires qui sont beaucoup... Enfin

beaucoup moins fixe tu vois elles arrivent à huit heures et demi elles partent à cinq heure et demie, nous du coup on doit montrer une souplesse sur nos horaires pour rencontrer les enfants. Ben ouais il y a beaucoup plus de boulot c'est pour ça que j'ai envie de changer aussi [rires]. Y'a trop de travail, y a trop de pression, il y a trop de responsabilités. Ouais c'est vraiment ce qui caractérise, ce qui caractérise Serv. Ouais

*Comment tu la. . enfin elle vient d'où cette pression ?*

C'est pas une pression de la hiérarchie, c'est pas une pression du juge, c'est une pression que je me mets parce que je travaille avec des enfants et puis parce que c'est leur vie qui est en jeu, c'est leur avenir. C'est des décisions voilà qui concernent... Ben ouais toute leur vie quotidienne, leurs parents, leur scolarité. . . Et du coup, du coup j'ai envie de comparer au. . . à toutes les responsabilités que j'ai avec mes enfants et ben c'est multiplié par quinze enfants quoi. Après la responsabilité est partagée puisque j'ai des familles d'accueils qui sont aussi responsables, j'ai un responsable, j'ai des collègues mais quand même qui c'est qui signe mes rapport au juge tout ça ? Ben c'est les éducateurs référents tout seuls. Donc on est quand même... on a une grosse grosse responsabilité dans la vie de ces enfants et moi c'est ça qui me met la pression. La pression de prendre les bonnes décisions ou pas pour eux mais, mais je te dis je le compare vraiment voilà aux choix qu'on fait pour nos enfants à partir du moment où on est parents et ben la légèreté elle disparaît et tous les jours on se pose la question est-ce que j'ai bien fait est-ce que j'ai mal fait, est-ce que c'est la bonne école pas la bonne école, et c'est exactement les mêmes questions avec les enfants de Serv. Est-ce que c'est le bon choix qu'il voit son parent ou pas ? Enfin oui les questions elles reviennent sans cesse et du coup elles sont envahissantes, elles occupent beaucoup, beaucoup de place. . . ben dans ma journée de travail mais dans ma vie personnelle.

21'40

*Et comment on coupe le perso et le pro ?*

Après moi j'ai le... Le trajet en voiture qui m'aide beaucoup à couper. Trajet en voiture donc voilà c'est déjà une chose. Après... Dans ce travail, dans ce travail-là particulièrement je trouve que c'est imbriqué... Imbriqué beaucoup beaucoup le perso et le pro. Ben... Parce que on amène beaucoup de nous pour travailler avec les enfants, pour travailler avec les parents. C'est... Il y a beaucoup de subjectivité. Ben oui y'a beaucoup de notre histoire, il y a beaucoup de ce qu'on est, y a beaucoup de comment on est parents. C'est présent, c'est présent dans mon travail tous les jours donc moi j'arrive pas à me diviser en deux donc ben, ouais je fais aussi au travail avec ce que je suis personnellement et. . . et inversement il m'arrive à la maison de voilà d'avoir en tête des situations d'enfants. C'est difficile, c'est difficile de faire... de faire une coupure, une coupure nette.

*Mmmm*

Après voilà moi j'ai ma vie personnelle qui m'aide beaucoup parce que . . . je travaille à temps partiel et puis du coup... Du coup j'ai l'impression que je me... Enfin je me, je me ressource, j'ai l'impression que j'arrive assez fraîche au boulot parce que, ben parce que j'ai eu du temps pour vraiment décompresser avec les enfants et puis... Ben je fais plein d'autres choses voilà à la maison ça me permet de faire partie d'associations, de machins qui sont complètement en dehors du boulot et j'ai l'impression que ça me donne une fraîcheur au boulot, que j'aurais pas si j'étais à temps plein, pas du tout. Donc ce qui m'aide à couper c'est mon temps partiels aussi.

*D'accord*

C'est d'aller me ressourcer, me ressourcer à la maison... Oui enfin pas un jour sur deux mais en tous les cas deux trois jours dans la semaine je me ressource et du coup je. . .je reprends de l'énergie pour... Pour le boulot mais... Ouais c'est pas... je l'ai jamais fait à temps plein le travail à Serv et je le ferais pas, j'aurais l'impression de... De me... J'allais dire de m'abîmer [rires]. Ouais j'aurais l'impression de pas prendre assez soin de moi, de me faire du mal de... Ouais. De porter trop de choses.

*Ouais, ouais. Et au sujet de prendre soin, enfin de prendre soin de soi, tu vois ce que je me demande par rapport à ce boulot qui est quand même dur, la lourdeur des situations que vous gérez. . .*

*Mmm*

*. . .quelle place il reste pour prendre soin, alors de soi mais aussi de ses collègues ? Tu vois ? Par rapport au. . . dans l'interaction du quotidien. . . Est-ce que finalement à côté de ce que vous voyez le reste, y a rien de grave quoi.*

*Mmmm*

*Tu vois ? Est-ce qu'il n'y a pas un effet un peu comme ça ? Parce que d'un côté...*

*À banaliser un peu tu veux dire ?*

*Parce que d'un côté vous êtes des professionnels de la relation donc j'ai envie de dire. . . vous êtes forcés enfin vous avez une qualité relationnelle qui doit...*

*Qui doit se ressentir, voilà*

*Au niveau des collègues etcaetera. Mais d'un autre côté il y a aussi cet effet de...*

*Oui vue ce que les gens traversent voilà comme difficulté nous... Après... Ouais je sais pas mais... Si c'est une protection qu'on met en place de façon assez naturelle mais... Jamais je me suis dite enfin ce que vit la collègue c'est rien à côté de. . . nan, nan je*

suis pas encore assez... Enfin je sais pas j'allais dire assez blindée, enfin j'en sais rien j'arrive encore à être touchée, ben voilà par une collègue qui a eu une dispute ou qui a son enfant... J'arrive à, oui j'arrive à être, à être touchée par ça même si c'est très lourd les situations qu'on vit je trouve qu'on prend quand même soin l'une de l'autre et justement parce qu'on vit des choses supers compliquées au boulot, parce qu'on traite de lourdes situations on sait que c'est très très important qu'on fasse attention l'une à l'autre, qu'on ne se juge pas, qu'on. . . Se valorise. Et tu verras si tu participes au GAP enfin c'est un... C'est vraiment le lieu ressource où on se fait un bien fou. Y'a pas le responsable aussi donc je pense que du coup il y a une autre... Moins de pression, moins d'attente, et là dans ces moments-là on peut vraiment ben se faire du bien, se valoriser, se dire que oui même si voilà on est... On a réagi comme ça c'était pas, c'était pas mal on se rassure. Donc ouais malgré toutes ces situations compliquées je trouve qu'il y a vraiment une qualité d'écoute dans l'équipe, une qualité de soutien, de respect, de confiance... Ouais que j'ai rarement rencontré.

26'55

*Alors c'est marrant parce que là tu vois on a discuté de deux aspects. D'un côté on n'a pas le temps...*

Oui

*. . .de s'enquérir des uns des autres etc., de connaître la vie des uns des autres...*

Oui

*Et puis d'un autre côté il y a une qualité d'écoute de respect etc....*

Oui. Mais... Mais je vais dire peut-être pas de la vie personnelle de chacune. C'est une qualité d'écoute, de respect, de... De ce qu'on fait au travail aussi, tu vois ? Parce que quand je te parle du GAP on se fait du bien tout ça c'est vraiment dans les situations, ça arrive dans les situations de boulot. Donc moi j'attends pas spécialement de mes collègues qu'elles me fassent du bien au niveau de ma vie personnelle ça j'aurais d'autres lieux j'aurais d'autres personnes, mais c'est qu'elles me fassent du bien dans mes situations de travail. Et là je trouve que à Serv c'est vraiment une richesse. On... Ouais on se tire pas dans les pattes enfin on est vraiment... Soutien. Et puis tu vois quand là quand je vois le dossier d'une collègue du coup elle prend pas... Elle prend pas en compte, nous on fera jamais ça. Si on voit une collègue qui est en peine et là la situation que je te dis où peut-être que je vais croiser cette maman tous les matins à l'école, mes collègues elles vont toutes me dire vraiment avec empathie "mais non Maelle, fais pas ça ça va polluer ta vie avec tes enfants et tout nous on va prendre", tu vois ? C'est dans ce sens-là que je trouve un soutien... Donc c'est vraiment dans des situations qui restent des situations de travail.

OK.

Mais... Mais qui font du bien et... Et ouais qui reflètent une solidarité entre nous quoi. Une solidarité...

*Est-ce que c'est déjà arrivé depuis que tu es à Serv qu'il y ait quelqu'un qui ait un petit drame ou une difficulté dans sa vie personnelle ?*

Oui. Oui, oui j'ai une collègue qui a vécu un divorce donc c'était quand même lourd oui...

*Et à ce moment-là il y a eu. . .*

Ben elle a... Ouais. Je pense qu'elle n'avait pas beaucoup le temps ben au vue de notre charge de travail de déverser, de parler donc je pense qu'elle a beaucoup gardé tout ça pour elle pendant longtemps mais que du coup il y avait des grosses répercussions sur le travail parce qu'on voyait qu'elle était pas bien dans la relation à l'autre...

*D'accord.*

Et... Que peut-être au bout de quelques temps mais longtemps, au bout d'un an elle a pu craquer et puis dire ce qui lui arrivait mais c'est vrai que de façon spontanée elle l'a pas dit non. Elle l'a pas dit...

*Donc pendant ce temps-là vous ne saviez pas ce qui se passait vous voyiez qu'il y avait un souci...*

Ouais on voyait qu'il y avait quelque chose mais... Non elle n'avait pas pu formuler... Enfin elle n'avait pas pu elle avait peut-être aussi pas envie j'en sais rien mais...

*Et du coup vous aviez pas posé la question ou... Parce que ça aurait été peut-être de...*

Oui de pouvoir lui demander, enfin de lui dire qu'on avait repéré que...

*Ouais.*

Ouais non je crois qu'on s'est pas autorisées. Qu'on s'est pas autorisées parce qu'on avait l'impression que peut-être elle voulait pas en parler mais... Oui c'était peut-être pas la bonne attitude mais en tous les cas on s'est pas autorisées à le faire parce qu'on avait l'impression qu'elle se protégeait, que du coup... Elle avait pas envie de... De parler de sa vie privée.

*Non mais c'est pas, je sais pas moi, je sais pas quelle est la bonne réponse hein.*

Oui, oui, oui. Mais oui c'est vrai que ça a mis beaucoup de temps à... Enfin elle a mis beaucoup de temps à nous en parler.

*Et après quand elle en a parlé du coup...*

Mais tu vois après moi j'ai échangé avec elle mais dans des situations duelles ou je me retrouvais avec elle par exemple pour faire du covoiturage des choses comme ça, mais jamais au niveau du travail jamais dans ces locaux. Tu vois c'était dans d'autres, dans d'autres lieux qu'on en parlait. Parce que je me serais pas vue parler en... Même en début de réunion tout ça jamais... Ben dans le bureau nan parce qu'on était jamais tranquilles non plus donc je vois pas tellement où j'aurais pu en parler avec elle... Voilà j'avais ces lieux comme ça en voiture où du coup ça nous permettait d'échanger, ouais sinon il y a pas tellement...

*Ouais les trajets en voiture enfin mais vous êtes beaucoup en déplacement tout seuls quand même...*

Ouais. Ouais sinon il y a pas. . . y a pas spécialement de hein, de temps comme ça où... Où on peut évoquer... Les choses de sa vie personnelle.

*D'accord. Je regarde mes notes... Ah oui juste une petite chose qui me... Tu sais par rapport au vouvoiement, tutoiement c'est... Ça me fait bizarre moi ici il y a des gens qui se vouvoient qui se tutoient... J'arrive même pas à noter qui c'est un peu*

Ouais, bah en fait entre tous les travailleurs sociaux et puis les secrétaires on se tutoit tous, toutes. . .

*Ouais.*

. . .toutes on est toutes des nanas. Les pys aussi donc c'est toutes du tutoiement, le vouvoiement c'est juste avec... Entre certaines éduc pas toutes [rires] et le chef. Les secrétaires et le chef ils se vouvoient... Tous. Les éduc, il y avait beaucoup d'éduc qui connaissaient Gilles avant parce qu'avant il était à l'ASE de Y.

*D'accord.*

Et du coup elles le rencontraient en collègues donc ben elles lui tutoyaient, elles ont continué à le tutoyer. Et après... Sabine, Alexia et moi on l'a jamais connu avant donc on le vouvoie et lui nous tutoie. Voilà. Après sinon non il y a le tutoiement dans toute l'équipe entre secrétaires, travailleurs sociaux, psy tout ça, y a le tutoiement.

*D'accord. Mais c'est vrai que vous faites pas. . .oui on disait il y a pas le temps du rituel du café mais il y a pas beaucoup.. . Y'a pas de temps quoi finalement enfin si il y a peut-être Noël quoi soit vous faites un repas, je suppose...*

Oui les repas de convivialité... Oui il y a Noël. Noël ouais, ouais on fait un repas. Après tu vois moi quand j'ai eu mon deuxième, j'ai tenu à inviter mes collègues chez moi. Donc c'était quelque chose qu'on faisait pas du tout enfin j'avais jamais été invitée

chez... chez une autre collègue et j'avais pas envie de... J'avais pas envie de venir avec mon petit ici. Tu vois c'est vraiment voilà mon lieu de travail et tout. Donc du coup j'ai dit ben pourquoi pas je verrai bien la réponse que j'ai mais... Je choisis d'inviter mes collègues à la maison et puis du coup elle l'ont vraiment bien accepté, elles sont toutes venues et c'était... C'étaient super sympa et à la fin on s'est fait la réflexion on s'est dit ouais c'est dommage qu'on n'ait pas plus de temps... De temps comme ça de convivialité ensemble. Donc tu coup tu vois là Alizée elle nous invite chez elle le sept novembre donc... Ouais c'est...

*Alizée ?*

Alizée, la secrétaire.

*Ah oui d'accord.*

Elle a déménagé et elle nous invite chez elle au mois de novembre donc c'est vrai que on s'était fait la réflexion on s'était dit c'est dommage qu'on ait pas plus de. . . ouais de temps en dehors du boulot quoi.

*Après c'est vrai que c'est pas évident d'amener ses collègues chez soi enfin c'est encore autre chose, c'est pas pareil que d'aller manger au resto à l'extérieur ou quoi.*

Ouais, ouais.

*Surtout que comme tu le disais très bien, c'est un métier quand même qui questionne beaucoup sa vie personnelle, sa vie familiale et tout.*

Donc du coup voilà tu te dis mes collègues elles vont venir... Regarder comment je fais avec mes gamins [rires].

*Si tu fais pas bien le ménage...[rires]*

Ouais si . . . si c'est pas propre chez moi, machin. Ouais, ouais, oui c'est vrai que oui, oui ça peut amener toutes ces questions-là donc . . . Voilà mais ça demande oui d'être suffisamment à l'aise. Tu vois, je l'aurais peut-être pas fait en arrivant mais peut-être au bout de. . .de six ans... Du coup... Du coup voilà. J'ai rien à cacher à mes collègues.

*Faut pas avoir peur du jugement quoi.*

[rires] Nan j'étais contente qu'elles viennent à la maison. Après j'avais pas de chef, c'est pas pareil encore, hein. . . L'échelon hein.. .

35'

*Ben justement*

[Toc à la porte, suivi du rire de Maelle car c'est le chef]

[Gilles] Excusez-moi, hein. Notre rencard est là.

[Maelle] Ah oui déjà, il est dix-sept heures ?

[Gilles] Ouais.

[Maelle] OK ben j'arrive.

OK

Donc voilà [rires]

*C'est marrant le... 'Il y avait pas de chef', ben voilà [rires]*

[rires]

*OK bon ben écoute merci... T'as des questions toi ?*

Non mais peut-être juste, oui que à la fin de la semaine tu puisses nous faire un retour aussi toi de ce que tu as observé, de notre fonctionnement d'équipe. . . Parce que je pense que quand on est comme ça extérieur à participer aux synthèses tout ça tu dois forcément repérer... Oui ben repérer des. . .je sais pas des fonctionnements qui peuvent t'interroger ou... Ou repérer au contraire je sais pas une solidarité ou tout ça... Oui ça peut être intéressant je trouve d'avoir des retours.

*Ben ce sera pas du tout à la fin de la semaine. . .*

[rires] Ben ouais mais bien sûr

*Non mais en plus je vais partir comme une voleuse parce que je vais pas venir vendredi matin donc je vais partir après le GAP là puisqu'a priori j'en ai parlé. . .*

Aux collègues

*. . .aux autres et les gens ont l'air d'être plutôt partants pour que je participe donc voilà.*

Ben oui c'est bien.

*Et puis je vais revenir donc normalement fin décembre là je suis en train de voir arranger ça puisque j'ai pas eu le temps de voir tout le monde là.*

D'accord.

*Et puis autant que. . .*

Oui, oui, oui.

*. . .Que je vous aide un peu mais oui je sais pas . . . Février mars quoi sûrement j'aimerais bien... Après voir comment ça peut s'organiser ici j'aimerais bien faire une heure ou deux heures où je peux vous faire quelques retours . . .*

Ah ben c'est bien.

*. . .et puis en discuter ça m'intéresserait aussi d'avoir votre...*

Ouais ouais notre point de vue, ouais.

*Donc... Ouais avec plaisir en tout cas si on arrive à trouver dans votre emploi du temps de Ministre.*

Ah ouais toi aussi tu trouves mais comme ça oui, un peu à vif ?

*Ah oui.*

Ah oui d'accord

*Enfin je trouve que le travail sur les emplois du temps prend beaucoup de temps*

Parce que t'as déjà fait... Ah oui

*Et que c'est une grosse grosse contrainte du boulot quoi ça a l'air d'être compliqué.*

Ouais, ouais d'accord oui .Oui parce que j' imagine que tu as déjà fait d'autres entreprises d'autres... D'autres lieux...

*Ah ben moi à titre personnel j'ai déjà fait, j'ai déjà pas mal bossé dans pleins pleins de boîtes et puis je fais aussi un autre terrain pour faire à peu près les mêmes analyses dans un autre truc d'une boîte de... De business classique quoi donc effectivement oui, oui.*

Ouais tu trouves qu'il y a aussi une...

*Ben là ça court tout le temps. Regarde la preuve [rires].*

La preuve !

Interview on the 23rd of September at 4.20 pm.

Well, listen, spontaneously I would answer that Sophie's attitude is appropriate, yes, that it is through the... that work is not the place to... well, to exchange about our personal problems then...

*On a mark from one to seven, how much would you mark her?*

From one to seven? [...] Five.

*Alright.*

'That's like that then I say that's my answer somewhat spontaneously...

*Mmm.*

That his reaction is appropriate [reacting to Sophie's scenario] and then that when you are at work there is...it is not the place to discharge your problems and all. After that if I put myself back in my working context I know that. . . It can happen that I exchange with the colleagues about situations sometimes complex from our private lives. So. . . So I think maybe it's linked to the fact that our team is a small team where we have trustful relationships and where on top of that we work on human beings and if we go through complicated things in our own family life, our private life, I think that. . . We need to discharge. It is not the right place because, well, there are other places to go to pour out our personal problems, but it can hinder our work. So as a result maybe sometimes only five minutes in the morning if the colleague looks shattered because she has just encountered a somewhat complicated situation with her child at any rate etc. Or an argument with her husband whatever, if she needs to pour it out I will listen to her. Because, well because maybe it will allow her to spend a better day and that maybe she will be more efficient at work so I struggle to have a definite attitude. To say that yes it is the work so we have no space at all to exchange around our private lives. At the same time, here I just mentioned an example of a situation where I would listen to my colleague if I see her arriving in the morning not looking well and when I ask her a question if she answers me, I will not say I have plenty of. . . I have plenty of syntheses or whatever, I will take the time.)

*OK*

Especially in our work with human beings, I think that... yes it's...

*Why?*

Well. . . Well, because if we are ourselves polluted by our complicated personal situations... I will give you an expression that I heard in training session and that I find quite telling: if our pipes are blocked [laughs] it's not very pretty, a psychologist used this, if our pipes are unblocked that is if we are free inside, if we have been able to

drain away all that is complicated inside us, as a result the person in front of us will feel comfortable and will also be able in turn, the person in our work, the person who is being received, a parent, a child, this person will also be able to talk freely about his or her problems, about what he or she is feeling, is living. Whereas if we are entangled in complicated situations, if we haven't been able to free ourselves from them, I think that as a consequence our listening is of less good quality. So maybe we can also be helpful to colleagues but it is in one-time, brief situations, that's it, after that if it gets out of proportions we will orient the colleague towards. . Yes towards a therapist or someone else. But you see I'm reacting to that because I have lived here then at work but not here with the Serv team, with a person who was outside, who was working in the [Prevention team], who was dealing with a grief, the death of her husband, and therefore. .. yeah who went through a period of depression after the death and then who came to work really there with the package on her back and who could not take things into consideration, who was pouring out like that naturally without being asked, she came to us, she sat down and then she spoke, she spoke, she spoke, . . There you go, about what she has experienced that is super hard, that she can not cope with it. And several times she came in front of me at the office, I did not say, she was called ... Blanche, I did not say, well I have work to do, I have work to do, I can't listen to you. I was able to tell her but after perhaps half an hour or forty-five minutes of listening to her on her personal life, perhaps it would be important that you could see a professional, there that you could confide in somebody else but I could not close the door bluntly by saying there. . . This is not the right place. I could not position myself like that.

*Yeah, it's not easy.*

5'40

Nope. Well no, it was ... Yeah, there was something inhumane. Come on I had known her for ten years, I've been working here for ten years, I meet her every morning so obviously we are in the framework of work and everything but ... But it was not possible for me then I thought that ... Yeah, well I felt ... I would not even say I had to, because then, then I felt like I was. . I was helping her at that time, she needed to talk hence I was available for her, so I listened to her naturally. It 's funny [laughs] because when I talk to you I tell myself my first answer like that, spontaneously, is that the attitude of. . . I don't remember there, Sophie, is completely suited and when I give you examples I feel like. . It would be somewhat different.' (

*It might be the difference between reality and...*

Yes.

*...What should be.*

Yes, absolutely, absolutely.

*Second short scenario...*

[...]

So no, I don't understand Virginie's behaviour.

*How much would you give her between one and seven?*

I would give her three [...]. I think that...that a team, here it is, there is still solidarity there is still some mutual assistance and also efficiency at work, well like I told you earlier it is also to relate to how much we are fulfilled in our personal life, well in our... And as a result between colleagues mutual assistance should exist. And for us, at the level of the unit it exists, we can rest on each other still. If... after that maybe that private companies where there is productivity, you see, the factory and all that, it might be different from our services where we are dealing with humans, we deal with social matters, we don't have, how do I put that, objectives in figures to make so maybe that makes a difference as well, for us in our services I think that mutual assistance does exist and if I have a colleague in front of me who... who is not doing well I won't go back to my work no. But I think that there is really a gap between the private, the... the sector, yes, the services sector and... yes, factories where productivity is required, where it is required really... That's true that we are lucky to be able to go drink a coffee if in the morning we feel that a colleague is not doing well and needs to pour out thoughts and yes I say it again, I do think that the productivity, the work progress, the efficiency at work, it is also related to personal flourishing, and how we are in our lives, it is a whole thing. Hence if... well if somebody is completely depressed by her family situation I think it is not going to go well at work and that ... that as a result between colleagues we also have to make sure that the other, well, she'd be still, yes, she'd still be well. Come on if one sees that something is not right one...I do feel the duty to ask the other what is going on. . .and then well to see how I can help her and so, I think we are not... we are not robots'

*Does it happen?*

... we are not robots.

*Does it happen, yes?*

That... well yes, often. Yes, often between colleagues...after that, how can I say... Yes, that's true that it is not necessarily the right...the right places because it could happen at the end of the day when one says let's go have a drink together if one has seen that the colleague was not well and so on, but no, it happens at our, our workplace, during... during our eight hours, actually I think you have already noticed that [laugh], we can have times, yes, during which we talk...

10'28

*How long have you been here, by the way?*

Well, at Serv, it's been 8 years, and it's been 10 years that I am in these facilities because before I was at the HSC [health and social centre].

*Ah yes, alright. You know particularly...*

There it is, so that's why I know, I know the team, the HSC and as a result, well that's the same, yes there can be times for talks as well with the colleagues from HSC.

*Alright, so you were a social worker at HSC.*

Mmmm, for two years.

*For two years and then you arrived at Serv.*

Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's it.

*Alright.*

I took the test and there was a position at Serv for a permanent position so...

*Alright.*

And yes that I think yes, same thing you might be interested, I found a huge gap between the Prevention Services and Serv in terms of ... of time when we...of time we spent talking about our personal situations.

*Oh yes?*

Yes, I found that in the HSC there was...the job is completely different so I did both hence I can compare. It is not the same workload, it is not the same pressure. Not the same things are at stake because of accompanying adults. At Serv we accompany children thus we are overwhelmed by other responsibilities, there it is, other workloads, and so I had much more time at HSC to talk about situations, personal situations, or situations that were completely outside of the work. Stuff, well actually that I have never seen at Serv, but times where we were trying on clothes, then. Well, it was ten years ago so maybe the context is different as well today but in any case when I arrived there was really... much more time than at HSC when we could talk about something else than work.

*It is true that actually, well at Serv I mean, there is no... first people are travelling a lot, there is no specific time for conviviality...*

No, no coffee time in common or...

Yes.

And yes, I... you see the... the start of the school year, I will not say that I suffered from it but I told the girls, like that, joking 'Oh well, I did not even have the time to tell you about the start of the school year for my children'. Because... well because we come and go and... and yeah we don't have necessarily... then a place to start with, you see in offices like that we cross each other but...

*Mmm.*

So I find the team is really convivial, trustful. But we have such a workload ...that we don't have much time to talk about our personal situations. And I...I really felt the different moving services, oh during the first months I said but it is not possible, I never said one word of my private life whereas I had the impression that in the HSC there was much more time. Then in the beginning I reacted like that, after I found that it was not necessarily negative. Well because ...that's it, it might not have been... it might not have been the right place either but... But yes, I think it was specific to the Serv team. Really...Yes the secretary she noticed the other day, Lea then she arrived not a long time ago, she said I don't know nothing about your life... all of you, the educators and so we come by the secretary office and I don't know if you have kids if...

*Yeah because the time for sharing like that it will be more at lunchtime, then.*

Then maybe, and as a result I don't have it because I don't have my lunch with colleagues, that's a choice. I don't have my lunch with the colleagues because I want to finish earlier in the evening then... Then that's it, at lunchtime I take fifteen minutes and I work because I don't want to finish...

*Ah yes, you work at lunchtime actually, you don't take a break then you go get a ...*

Well either I bring some and I eat in, you see, in fifteen-twenty minutes at the cafeteria and then I know, you see, that the colleagues are here until half past six, seven, but I don't follow this pattern because I have small ones and I want to come home earlier... Earlier at home and that here it is, the work be done [laugh]. Then I know that if I take one hour and a half at lunchtime then I will finish later in the evening. But maybe that yes. That's true that this time for conviviality might be happening at lunchtime.

*I say that as well because the secretaries don't participate either to this... They don't go, well from what I've seen, they don't go have lunch outside either. Then as a result...*

Yeah. Well, after that there is the choice, I tell you, on my personal organisation, and there is the, well, financial choice as well, personally I can't at all afford eating in restaurant and so, same thing, I tell myself that I'd rather save the restaurant tickets

to go later in the weekend with my husband, well you see, it's really about living choices. But maybe yes, there is a time for conviviality at lunchtime... that can, yes, be lost... well, that's it.

*But that's true that there are no times... there is no coffee time. That's similar to the arrivals in the morning, there is not really... one doesn't know really if people are here or not here, people do not necessarily go around in every office.*

Nay, nay, nay, nay, nay, nay, nay. Yeah. So actually...

*Like this morning with Arlette, for example, I mean we did not know that she was here.*

Ah well yes, that's true [laughs]. Ah yes, yes, yes, yes, so you see I quite regretted it because it's true that going to the secretary office to say Good morning before going into Gilles' office... There it is, I had arrived at nine o'clock sharp so I don't have time but I told myself, OK, that's not really... that's not cool, see. You see, going through the secretary office and after going in the... Yeah Serv is quite individual, eh. We are somewhat in our... if we can call them our situations, I mean the children that we are in charge of, so we still have times for meetings on Tuesdays and Thursdays but otherwise we are like free spirits. We make our..our visits, our schedule.

*Alright...And...Relatively to the culture especially, do feel a local authority culture first of all because you were at the HSC before, is there a local authority culture or...it does not feel particularly?*

Well I would say even maybe a civil service culture or...see we do have the freedom to go have a coffee several times a day. Well you see, in comparison, you see my husband is working in private sector, and I do have much more freedom than him to go get a small coffee...

*Where does he work?*

At R in a car parts factory.

*Alright.*

So...

*So he is on a schedule...*

Yes, you see, it is counted, he even has to clock in I think. Clocking in to go to the toilets [laughs], clocking in to go have a coffee. So I would say that the civil service culture is about... Yeah, if you feel like going have a coffee you go have a coffee. For me that's... for me that's quite lucky in our job that... there it is, that we have these moments to exchange with colleagues, yes, if you arrive one morning and you are not

in good shape, you still have the possibility to express it to somebody, you always have listening, attentiveness, you always have a smile, you always have somebody to comfort you and it's not the other person in front of you is going to dive in her file right away...no, I find that we are lucky.

17'54

*And that's about the local authority for you, it's not specifically...*

Yes, yes, yes, yes. I think that... It's not in every service of the local authority that we have this opportunity... yes, to have... to have time for conviviality maybe slightly more frequent... Yes, you might not have observed that but in a day we can still get away, go have a coffee with a colleague or... and maybe that there, well maybe it is not in a factory, there it is not possible for them to do that.

*And you would say that there is a Serv culture?*

Well Serv culture I would say it's a lot of work. Well that it is... it's...I don't know how to tell you that, I am not going to tell you that others work less but... yeah, actually work takes really... that's normal, we're at work [laughs], it takes lots of room, it puts pressure on us. Yes, I have the impression that I am more distressed than a colleague who works at HSC, yes. And then it is not only an impression because I am been working at the HSC so I experienced it and I have girlfriends who work at HSC and with whom I exchange regularly and there is no contest, we are under much more pressure, we have a workload that is much higher, we have hours that are much more... well, much less fixed, you see they arrive at half past eight, they leave at half past eight, we have to show flexibility on our hours to meet the children. Well yeah, there is much more work, for that matter I wish to change job [laughs]. There is too much work, there is too much pressure, there are too many responsibilities. Yeah it's really what characterises Serv. Yeah.

*How do you... actually, how does this pressure come from?*

It is not some pressure from the hierarchy, it is not some pressure from the judge, it is some pressure that I put because I work with children and also because their life is at stake, it is about their future. The decisions deal with...well yes, all their everyday life, their parents, their schooling... And as a result, as a result I would like to compare to...to all the responsibilities that I have with my children, well it is multiplied by fifteen children then. Actually the responsibility is shared since I have foster families who are responsible as well, I have a head of service, I have colleagues, but anyhow who signs the reports to the Judge and all that? Well, the educators in charge do on their own. So we are still...we have a big, big responsibility in these children's lives and for me that's where the pressure comes from. The pressure to take the right decisions or not for them but, but I'm telling you, I really compare to, there, to the

choices that we make for our children from the moment that we are parents, well then lightness disappears and every day one wonders did I do well or did I do bad, is it the right school or not the right school, and that's exactly the same questions with Serv children. Is it the right choice that he sees his parent or not? Actually yes, questions come back over and over and eventually they are overwhelming, they take a lot, a lot of room... well in my day of work but also in my personal life.

21'40

*And how does someone separate personal and professional?*

After that I have the...the travel in a car that helps me a lot to cut off. Travel in a car so there, it's one thing already. After that... in this job, in this job there especially I find that it's embedded... embedded a lot, a lot, between personal and professional. Well... Because we bring a lot from ourselves to work with children, to work with parents. It's...there is plenty of subjectivity. Well yes, there is a lot from our stories, there is a lot from what we are, there is a lot from how we are as parents. It's there, it's there in my work every day so I, I do not manage to divide myself in two, so then yeah, I also do at work with what I am personally and... and inversely it happens that at home I have children's situations in mind. It's difficult, it's difficult to do...to cut off, to cut off neatly.

*Mmmm.*

After that, my personal life helps me a lot because... I work part-time and then as a result... Then I have the impression that I... Well I ... I revitalise myself, I have the impression that I arrive quite fresh at work because, well because I had time to relax really with the children and so... Well I do many other things there at home, it allows me to be part of associations, of thingies that are completely outside of work and I have the impression that it provides me with freshness at work, that I would not have if I were working full time, not at all. So what helps me cutting off is my being part time as well.

*Alright.*

It's to go revitalise myself, revitalise myself at home...Yes actually not every other day but in any case two three days in the week I revitalise myself and as a result I... I refill energy for... for work but... Yeah, it's not... I never did it full-time, Serv's job and I would not do it, I would have the impression to... to... I was gonna say to damage myself [laugh]. Yeah I would have the impression that I don't take care of myself enough, that I hurt myself... Yeah. That I carry too many things.

*Yeah, yeah. And about taking care, well, taking care of oneself, you see, I was wondering because of this job it's hard, the harshness of the situations you handle...*

Mmm.

*... what room is there left to take care, then of oneself but also of one's colleagues? You see ? Regarding... in everyday interactions... is it in the end that next to what you see otherwise, nothing is serious then.*

Mmmm

*You see? Isn't there something like that happening? Because on one side...*

Casualising somewhat you mean?

*Because on one side you are professionals of relationships, hence I shall say... you have to, well you have a relational quality that must...*

That must be felt, there

*With colleagues etcetera. But on the other side there is as well the effect of...*

Yes, given what people go through with their difficulties we... After that... Yeah I don't know but... Whether it is a protection that we set in place quite naturally but... I never told myself actually what the colleague is going through it nothing compared to... no, no, I'm not yet enough... Well I don't know, I was gonna say armoured, well I don't know I still manage to be touched, well there, by a colleague that went through a fight or whose son... I manage to, yes I manage to be, to be touched by that even though the situations we live are very heavy, I find that we take care of each other in any case and especially because we live very difficult things at work, because we deal with heavy situations we know it is very very important to be attentive to each other, not to judge each other, to... value each other. You will see if you participate in the PAG, well it's a... It's really a place for resources where we make each other feel great. The head is not there as well so I think that as a result there is another... less pressure, fewer expectations, and in these moments we can really make each other feel good, value each other, tell each other that yes, even though one is... has reacted this way it was not, it was not bad, we reassure each other. So yeah despite all these complicated situations, I find that there really is a listening quality in the team, a supporting quality, respect, trust... Yes, that I rarely encountered.

26'55

*So it's funny because see, we have talked about two aspects. On one side one does not have the time...*

Yes

*... to ask each other etcetera, to know each other's lives...*

Yes

*And on another side there is a listening and respect quality etcetera...*

Yes. But... But I am gonna say maybe not each other's personal lives. It's a quality of listening, respect, of... Of what we do at work as well, you see? Because when I talk to you about PAG we make each other feel good all that, it's really in the situations, it happens in the work situations. So I don't particularly expect from my colleagues that they make me feel good regarding my personal life, for that I would have other places, I would have other persons, but I expect that they make me feel good in my work situations. And there I find that at Serv it is really rich, we... Yeah we don't stab each other in the back, actually we are really... supportive. And you see when there, when I see the file of a colleague as a result she does not take... she does not take into account, we would never do that. If we see that a colleague is struggling and there, the situation I'm telling you about where maybe I am going to encounter this mum every day at school, my colleagues are all gonna say really with empathy, "but no Maelle, don't do that, it's gonna pollute your life with your children and all, we are gonna take that", you see? It's in this sense that I find that there is some support... So it's really in situations that remain work situations.

OK.

But that makes us feel good and... And yeah, that represent a solidarity between us then. A solidarity...

*Has it already happened since you are at Serv that somebody has a little drama or a difficulty in her personal life?*

Yes. Yes, yes I had a colleague who went through a divorce so it was quite heavy yes...

*And at this moment were there....*

Well she has... Yeah. I think that she didn't have much time, regarding our workload, to pour out, to talk then I think she kept it for her a lot all that to herself for a long time but as a result there were big effects on the work because we could see that she was not well in her relationships with others...

*Alright*

And... That maybe after some time but a long time, after one year she was able to crack and say what was happening to her but it's true that spontaneously she did not say, no. She did not say...

*So during this time you didn't know what was happening, you saw that there was a problem...*

Yeah, we saw that something was happening but... No she didn't want to express... Well she could not, maybe she did not feel like it I don't know but...

*And as a result you did not ask the question or...Because it would have been maybe...*

Yes, being able to ask, well to tell her that we had noticed that...

*Yeah.*

Yeah, no, I think we did not authorise ourselves. We did not authorise ourselves because we had the impression that maybe she did not want to talk about it but... Yes, it was maybe not the right attitude but anyway we did not authorise ourselves to do it because we had the impression that she was protecting herself, that as a result... She didn't want to... to talk about her private life.

*No but it's not, I don't know, I don't know what is the right answer, see.*

Yes, yes, yes. But yes it's true that it took a long time to... well she took a long time to talk to us about it.

*And after when she talked about it then...*

But you see I have exchanged with her but in dual situations where I was with her for example to share a ride, things like that, but never at work, never in these facilities. You see it was in others, in other places that we talked about it. Because I would not have pictured myself talking in... even in the start of a meeting all that never... Well in the office no because it was never quiet either so I don't really see where I could have talked about it with her... There, I had these places like that in the car where then we could exchange, yeah, otherwise there is not really...

*Yeah, travels in the car, well but you are travelling a lot by yourselves still...*

Yeah. Yeah otherwise there is no... There is not really any, see, any time like that where... where we can talk... about things about one's personal life.

*Alright. I look at my notes... Ah yes, just one small thing that I... You know regarding saying 'vous', saying 'tu' it's... It's a bit weird for me here some people say 'vous', say 'tu'... I can't even take a note of who that is.*

Yeah, well actually between all social workers and secretaries we say 'tu'...

*Yeah.*

... we're all girls. Psychologists as well then it's saying 'tu' for everybody, saying 'vous' is just with... Between some educators, not all [laughs] and the boss. The secretaries and the boss, they say 'vous'... everybody. The educators, there were many educators who knew Gilles before because before he was at children protection services of Y.

*Alright.*

And as a result they met him as a colleague then they said 'tu' to him, they kept saying 'tu' to him. And then... Sabine, Alexia and I, we never knew him before so we say 'vous' to him and he says 'tu' to us. There it is. After that otherwise no, everybody says 'tu' in the whole team and the secretaries, social workers, psychologists all that, people say 'tu'.

*Alright. But it's true that you don't do... yes, we were saying that there is no ritual times for coffee but there is not much... there is not much time then eventually, actually yes there is maybe Christmas then, you have a meal together I suppose...*

Yes, the conviviality meals... Yes, there is Christmas. Christmas yeah, yeah we have a meal. After that you see when I had my second child, it was important to me to invite my colleagues at my place. So it was something that we didn't do at all, well I had never been invited at... at another's colleague and I didn't want to... I didn't want to come with my little one here. You see, it's really my place of work and all. So as a result I said well why not, I will see then the sort of answer I get but... I chose to invite my colleagues at my place and then they accepted it very well, they all came and it was... It was really nice and in the end we thought, we told each other yeah, that's a shame that we don't have more times... more conviviality times like that together. SO you see there Alizée, she invites us to her place on the seventh of November so... Yeah it's...

*Alizée?*

Alizée, the secretary.

*Ah yes, alright.*

She moved houses and she invites us to her place in November so it's true that we thought about it, we told each other it's a shame that we don't have more... yeah more times outside of work then.

*But it's true that it's not easy to bring one's colleagues home, actually that's something else, it's not the same than eating out in a restaurant of this kind if things.*

Yeah, yeah.

*Especially because as you said very well, it's a job that interrogates a lot one's personal life, one's family life and all.*

So as a result there you tell yourself my colleagues are going to come... Look how I do with my kids [laughs]

*If you don't do the housework well... [laughs]*

Yeah if... if my home is not clean, and so. Yeah, yeah, yes it's true that yes, it can lead to all these questions then... There but it requires yes, to be sufficiently comfortable. You see, I might not have done it when I had just arrived but maybe after... 6 years... finally... Finally there. I have nothing to hide to my colleagues.

*It's about not fearing being judged then.*

[laugh] No I was happy that they came at my place. After that, I did not have a boss, it's something else again, eh... the grade, eh...

35'

*Well, exactly.*

[Knock on the door, followed by Maelle's laugh because the person coming in is the boss]

[Gilles] Excuse me, uh. Our date is here.

[Maelle] Ah yes already, is it five o'clock?

[Gilles] Yeah

[Maelle]OK so I'm coming.

OK

So that's it [laugh]

*It's funny the... 'there was no boss', well there he is [laughs]*

[laughs]

OK well, so listen, thank you... Do you have questions on your side?

No but maybe only, yes that at the end of the week you could give us some feedback as well from you, what you observed, about the way we function as a team... Because I think that when one is like that external participating to synthesis meetings and all you must notice... Yes well notice some... I don't know some way of functioning that

you can question or... Or notice on the contrary I don't know a solidarity or all that...  
Yes that can be interesting I think to have some feedbacks.

*Well it won't be at the end of the week at all...*

[laughs] Well yeah of course.

*No but on top of that I am going to sneak off because I am not going to come on Friday morning so I will leave after the PAG meeting there since it seems that I talked about it...*

To the colleagues.

*... to the colleagues and people seem to be willing to go for it for me to participate so there it is.*

Well yes that's fine.

*And I will come back, it should be at the end of December there I am trying to arrange that because I did not have time to see everybody here.*

Alright.

*And I could as well...*

Yes, yes, yes.

*... help you a little bit but yes I don't know.... February or March then probably I would like to... After that see how it can be organised here but I would like to have one or two hours to give you some feedback...*

Ah well, that's fine.

*.... And discuss it, I would be interesting to have also your...*

Yeah yeah our point of view, yeah.

*So... Yes, with pleasure in any case if we manage to find in your Minister schedule.*

Ah yeah you too you find so but like that yes, at the moment?

Ah yes.

Ah yes, alright.

*Actually I find that the work on the schedules takes lots of time.*

Because you already did... Ah yes.

*And that it is a big big constraint of the job then, it looks like it is complicated.*

Yeah, yeah alright, yes. Yes because I imagine that you already did many other companies other... other places...

*Ah well, personally I already did, I already worked in many many other organisations and I do another field as well to do about the same analyses in another thing of a company of... Business as usual the, so actually yes, yes.*

Yeah you think that there is a...

*Well here people run all the time. Look at the proof [laughs].*

The proof!

## Appendix H - Overview of NVivo codes

### Interviews:

| <b>Label</b><br>Description and reflexive notes   | <b>Sources</b> | <b>References</b> |
|---|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Arrival-adapting</b><br>Refers to newcomers, periods of adaptation, socialization. It can be people talking about themselves or about other people.  | 32             | 110               |
| <b>Attention-availability</b><br>Relates to being attentive to people, in the sense of devoting attention to them, usually as opposed to being attentive to one's work. In first instance it encompassed as well availability as the meanings are very close: being attentive is devoting cognitive resources to people. So this category also encompassed when people said they spend x minutes with somebody (being to support him/her on work task or personal matter). Taking time to enquire about people (that was triggered by scenario 1), listening to people.<br><br>Records both people saying that one has to be attentive and examples of people seeing that somebody needs attention.<br><br>=> In the end it is certainly a subcategory of caring.<br><br>Keywords: attention, time (minutes)  | 30             | 85                |
| <b>Authenticity</b><br>In this label is the fact that one can be oneself, in opposition to playing a role, showing a superficial attitude, being false (so it encompasses the latter as well). It also encompasses when people talk about hiding some things purposely to the others in the company.<br><br>But it could also be applied to a more transversal analytical theme: for example the transparency of the offices, is it authentic or fabricated? This latter is linked to personal spacing.<br><br>04/09/15<br>It might be that authenticity is the filter that makes everything different between Serv and Comms. For example talking about one's personal life at work, not the same level of closeness in both settings. Also exchanging-sharing. Even performing-producing: at Comms there is the level of concrete performance (gaining clients for example) and the halo of being good. There is not such double level at Serv. | 24             | 97                |
| <b>Away from office</b><br>Saying that people are away from office, traveling. Mainly a Serv category seemingly.<br><br>Used to explain specificity of their relations.   | 9              | 18                |

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| <p><b>Boundary work life</b><br/>The category boundary work life is applied when people talk about the boundary, the distinction. Then it encompasses quite different topics. On a first level it refers to the distinction that people draw between work and personal life, or professional and personal, but there is a subcategory for that 'distinction pro-perso', when people explicitly try to distinguish it. But it mainly refers to the way people manage the boundary, how they try to cut between work and personal life, even if then the distinction is implicit.</p> <p>Story of Marie-Claire (Serv) going through a divorce: they don't enquire right away because they feel she doesn't want to talk. But I know that she talked to some people, only not everybody in the team. I think this is also respecting the boundary so that people don't have to bring their personal issues at work and can use work as a resting place. As Arlette who didn't want people to know about the issues with her daughter.</p> <p>28/05/2015<br/>Questions/analysis:<br/>- What does it mean when it is harder to distinguish between the two categories 'distinction pro-perso' and 'boundary work-life'?<br/>- Isn't the boundary less porous at Comms in the end? For them the distinction pro-perso seems more obvious, more implicit. They are showing themselves but only a customized part of themselves. On the other way this lack of authenticity might be spreading on their personal life and then the whole boundary might seem all porous, they will adopt a similar self in the private sphere. Effect of experience there?<br/>- A way to manage the boundary and distinguish: two mobile phones, one pro and one perso.</p> | 35 | 166 |
| <p><b>Career-HR</b><br/>This category encompasses talk about how people navigate jobs and especially why. Also encompasses when people talk about conditions for leaving or firing people. Finally it encompasses when people talk about the HR department or policies. Also encompasses their educational background.</p> <p>At Comms people talk about climbing the social ladder in the company or in other company, explicitly or implicitly associated with salary increase.</p> <p>At Serv people reflect about their job, what they want to do, if they want to work full time, where they have been before and how they ended up where they are.</p> <p>07/09/15<br/>People in Comms have career in mind, being climbing ladder or changing organisation or even totally changing activity. At Serv people think about leaving sometimes but they don't really think of it in terms of promotion, it is more about what you want to do in your life, or very practical accounts of how to move inside the institutions' career rules.</p>  | 31 | 150 |
| <p><b>Caring for the person</b><br/>Text coded in this category accounts for how people worry about others, how they try to support them, in case of particular personal difficulty or for facing the everyday strain of the work. Being sensitive to the issues of the others (or not), showing interest for the person herself.</p> <p>Also when people tell that others make them feel better.</p> <p>At Serv it does not include taking care of children or families, this will be found in "social services" rather.</p> <p>[look for expressions of compassion there]</p>  | 29 | 107 |
| <p><b>Celebration</b><br/>Celebrations at work, being for different kinds of occasion, involves drink and/or food. Or for no occasion, just having a drink after work.</p>   | 18 | 35  |
| <p><b>Coffee</b><br/>When people talk about the coffee, mostly sharing a coffee and talking.</p>   | 19 | 26  |
| <p><b>Colleagues judgment</b><br/>This encompasses direct evocation of colleagues judging (or not, as usually at Serv), as well as people judging colleagues or telling their fears of being judged negatively.</p> <p>At Comms it is often associated with career, in the sense that you have to be evaluated to move up social ladders.</p>  | 22 | 75  |

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| <p><b>Communication issues</b><br/>When people regret not talking to people enough or that people don't communicate enough. Here it is about work, not personal matters. Then it is a bit an opposite to 'exchanging-sharing (work)'.<br/><br/>It seems more frequent at Serv but are there more problems at Serv or are they more critical?</p>   | 25 | 60  |
| <p><b>Comparing past-present</b><br/>Mainly people who have a quite long experience (more than five years), they tend to compare who it was before at the same job rather than comparing workplaces. It seems that the comparison is very important in the sensemaking process.</p>  | 19 | 40  |
| <p><b>Comparing workplaces</b><br/>People make sense of their own experience by comparing it to other workplaces. But it can be comparing based on their experience (they have worked there before), based on close people's experience (husband working in an industrial plant, daughter in a lawyer agency) or simply on pure representations (company vs Commslic service, profit-making vs nonprofit). However I can't be sure that this latter case is not an instance of the previous one but that they didn't want to disclose it.</p>  | 32 | 164 |
| <p><b>Conflict</b><br/>Recollection of conflicts or conflictual situations. But that includes as well accounts of people being mean to other people even if that doesn't trigger conflict because especially of the hierarchical asymmetry that makes it uneven and people fold (at Comms).<br/><br/>And also less casual non-connection between people (eg not taking time to share a moment).<br/><br/>[re-code to create a category 'un-connection']</p>  | 30 | 110 |
| <p><b>Conseil Général</b><br/>Specific to Serv.<br/>Category that accounts for the institutional level (from their words), so the big bureaucratic organizations. They mainly talk about that referring to career because obviously not much is decided at the level of the entity, and about the budget, procedures, rules, that apply to them. Hence it is generally more a constraint than anything else.<br/><br/>It seems that there is no 'culture' recognised as such for the Conseil Général. Maybe what people answer is more about the corporate culture, i.e. what belonging to this organization means to you. Naturally people can't answer the question of culture in the view of culture as a root metaphor (Smircich, 1983). Then people from Serv have a corporate culture that refers to Serv not to Conseil Général.<br/><br/>People don't talk about what other people think of CG but it seems that they have quite an external view of it actually, as if they were not really part of it, have they any sense of belonging?</p> | 13 | 48  |
| <p><b>Considerate</b><br/>When people explain how one needs to be considerate or to consider other's feelings.</p>   | 15 | 24  |
| <p><b>Consulting</b><br/>Relative to the content of the job in PR or the specificity of the department.</p>  | 2  | 10  |
| <p><b>Creative department</b><br/>When people talk about the creative people or the creative department. Usually to underline differences. It seems that it is the point of reference for many things.<br/><br/>[check where are the instances, using maybe research on 'créas' or 'creative']<br/>[coded also for planning and New Biz, to separate later]</p>  | 7  | 33  |
| <p><b>Department specificities</b><br/>When people (at Comms) describe different functioning between the different department of the organisation. Very often they come to talk about the creative people who are always considered at odd.<br/><br/>Also includes how the job (work tasks) influence on the way people interact.</p>  | 21 | 57  |
| <p><b>Differences between organisations</b><br/>This code stands for how people explain behavioral differences. So it is not 'comparing workplaces' in which people accounts for real experiences they had, specific workplaces. Here it is a general attribution of determinacy (here as opposed to differences between people).</p>  | 15 | 29  |

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| <p><b>Differences between people</b><br/> This category covers discourses in which people talk about how people are different, in a way to make sense for different behaviors. Often in a general tolerance discourse.</p> <p>When people evoke this theme during interview it is on a very theoretical point of view, like a prescription but it doesn't appear in what they really do. Sensemaking but not enacted.</p> <p>Also when they talk about differences in national culture (Effie, Ella).</p> <p>When they talk about themselves, it is linked with identity. Eg: Odile says she is empathetic, or team-building and bases her answers on this point.</p> <p>This is also a liability, like the 'humanity' discourse: people are different and you have to adapt to these differences.</p> | 36 | 143 |
| <p><b>Different work hours</b><br/> Seems to be only at Serv: people evoke the fact that they don't do the same work hours as a factor for influencing their relationships.</p> <p>Can include part time jobs.</p>   | 7  | 11  |
| <p><b>Distinction pro-perso</b><br/> When people try to elaborate the distinction between the work sphere and the personal life sphere, or when they use this distinction to justify an argument, to justify different way of behaving for example. They distinguish either very abstractly or using spaces, time.</p> <p>Sometimes it overlaps with 'boundary work-life' when they are at the same time defining the distinction and explaining how to deal with that concretely.</p> <p>[Look at the definition (implicit?) of professionalism]</p>  | 30 | 95  |
| <p><b>Emotions</b><br/> Serv: people talk about their emotions or others' emotions quite easily. They display emotions. Role of being women?</p> <p>Also at Comms. But it encompasses both positive and negative emotions.</p> <p>[It would certainly be worth recoding positive/negative emotions]</p>  | 32 | 116 |

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| <p><b>Exchanging-sharing (work)</b><br/> This category both refers to exchanging on personal aspects or for professional purposes. In the latter instance it then encompasses work meetings, in which people exchange about their work.</p> <p>It also encompasses occurrences of 'listening' to others (maybe this should be another category?)</p> <p>At Serv it seems that exchange very often come in answer to work strain (difficulty of the task, especially on the emotional dimension).</p> <p>At Comms it encompasses different communication channels, such as tchating, and how people use tchate instead of talking and/or instead of writing emails.</p> <p>04/01/2016: re-devison of the node, too broad. Then separated from 'Sharing (personal)', and re-labelled adding '(work)'. However it is not always clear when it is work and when it is personal: sometimes they praise exchange times in general and it encompasses both, it is rather a bonding time really.</p> <p>Also creation of the node 'meeting' but it is really a subcategory then.</p> <p>Also creation of 'relation manager', as it also might allow to reduce the 'role hierarchy' category. Then the overlap with 'helping' is important, as helping often starts with taking the initiative to exchange with a colleague on work (and sometimes helping can be limited to this exchange, to help the colleague seeing things better).</p> <p>On the overall this node might be a more analytical category, a second-order coding. Problem being that exchange is talking, then it is the basis of all social interaction, and the basis of all organisation. Then sometimes the re-coding simply consists in taking out the selection because it has been coded too broadly. But then of course 'smoking' and 'coffee machine' for instance are also associated with 'exchanging-sharing'.</p> <p>Then it is close to 'availability-attentiveness' as well. And even 'caring for the person' as the act of care goes through exchange as well. And 'communication issues' is the opposite in some way.</p> | 34 | 188 |
| <p><b>Existing</b><br/> When people talk about existing or not: striving to exist, acknowledging the existence of others (individually or as a group).</p>   | 8  | 9   |
| <p><b>Experienced</b><br/> When people talk about their own numerous years of experience at work, or those of others, as a factor for a certain way to behave, or be considered.</p> <p>Also includes the opposite: when they are not experiences (or junior) as a factor explaining behavior.</p> <p>Also sometimes people talk about being young, then it overlaps between maturity in one's life and maturity in one's job.</p>   | 32 | 104 |
| <p><b>Face saving</b><br/> Refers to the purposive effort to be careful of negotiating each other's position in the interaction.</p>   | 7  | 9   |
| <p><b>Fairness</b><br/> Was created for Serv when people talk about fairness among the members of the team, considering others' workload and constraints. But at Comms it seems it refers more to equality rather than fairness.</p>   | 17 | 28  |
| <p><b>Food sharing</b><br/> When people evoke sharing food as a practice per se.</p>   | 10 | 12  |
| <p><b>Freedom at work</b><br/> Freedom at work accounts for the fact that people determine their way of working, their tasks. Both at the individual and at the collective level.</p> <p>Then I also coded the opposite, i.e. when people explain they have to choice, no room for initiatives.</p>  | 18 | 53  |
| <p><b>Greetings</b><br/> Refers to the way people greet each other when they arrive at work (usually in the morning). So it encompasses questions of politeness and the formality of the manners.</p>  | 22 | 50  |
| <p><b>Having fun- humor</b><br/> Category created for Comms, when people talk about sharing fun at work, making jokes, playing, etc.</p> <p>Changed the title and added "humor" on the 05/04/16 for Serv to encompass joking. Even if it is more often on a cynical tone. [then need to recode probable from "interaction quality-cordiality"]</p>   | 15 | 46  |

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| <p><b>Helping</b><br/>This category refers to the action or will to help or need to be helped for one's work tasks. However it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the help for the work and the help on one's personal life because both are interdependent: how to do a good job if you are personally diminished? At Serv they express directly this issue.</p> <p>Also most of the time it refers to helping doing one's job but sometimes it refers to helping the personal being of the other, being a support.</p> <p>At Comms the support is also evoked but only on the tasks, not in the personal life. So in this code is also included the solidarity that is expressed by people, how they help each others.</p> <p>At Serv it includes a lot solidarity, feeling supported by the team, beyond the actual practical help.</p>   | 35 | 172 |
| <p><b>Foster Families</b><br/>When people talk about Foster Families (at Serv) and their behavior, place, role, etc.</p>  | 5  | 13  |
| <p><b>Humanity</b><br/>When referring explicitly to the humanity of people at work (as opposed sometimes to robots).</p> <p>Also can be direct reference to the body.</p>   | 28 | 62  |
| <p><b>Image Organisation</b><br/>In Comms interviews some people evoke how their organisation is viewed from the outside as a clue to explain what it is, how it works. Image as something abstracted, as what people who don't know think. So different from work quality, as what clients/users think.</p> <p>[Question: to what extent is the 'image of the organisation' different and separated from the 'culture of the organisation'? external/internal dialogism?]</p> <p>At Serv people don't seem to bother about their image in the general population. Surprising since it has a strong image (cf. documentaries for example). They talk sometimes about their image inside the bigger institution, comparatively to other services, a different matter.</p> <p>This category encompasses the image of the organisation as well as the image of the profession more broadly.</p>  | 16 | 35  |
| <p><b>Individual performance</b><br/>Relates to the fact that people have to perform, they have to be good at their work. People can talk about it for themselves or for others. Also includes appearing performant (looking good).</p> <p>Very rare occurrences at Serv, this category appeared when beginning coding Comms interviews.</p> <p>[Question: to what extent is it related to 'self-interest'?]</p>  | 23 | 123 |
| <p><b>Information exchange</b><br/>Information exchange is distinct from Exchange-sharing in that it is very focused on the practical outcome (getting an information, even precisising the channel, or technology system for that) and not on the social interaction or connection that is necessary to get it. For some interviewees this distinction doesn't exist (eg Enzo) and they mix up linking people and getting informed whereas other clearly distinguish the social act and the work task act.</p> <p>But also it doesn't apply to exchanging on personal issues (as is encompassed in the 'exchanging-sharing' category), it is almost only related to work. Maybe because talking about personal lives implies necessarily a more complex interaction than information giving.</p> <p>In this sense the information is something that you can give, not something that is constructed together. Also quick.</p> <p>At Serv this category overlaps the 'work coordination' category, people complain about not necessarily good communication. But it is a very different setting in terms of IT to Comms. Moreover Comms is a high-intensive knowledge organisation, which means that the information is at the core of the activity, whereas at Serv it seems more peripheral.</p> <p>Then at Serv all the coding under this category is also coded in 'exchanging-sharing', it is absolutely a subcategory. In general there is no such thing as an information to give at Serv, they are more in the paradigm of social construction, they are in a psychanalytic environment. [different from observation: infoming is an issue]</p> | 19 | 34  |

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| <p><b>Interaction quality-cordiality</b><br/> This category is evoked at Comms sometimes in such a generic way that it might rather refer to the social grammar that are the rules to behave in society.<br/> It encompasses when people talk about the ambiance at work. That they dare talking to each other and don't fear to be scorned (even to high-level people at Comms).</p> <p>Not very present at Serv because people directly talk about the higher involvement level, that is to say 'liking people', good relations with people.</p> <p>Difficulty with the exact term "bonnes relations" because actually it really means a quite superficial level that I call interactions.</p> <p>It is certainly a continuum between 'interaction quality-cordiality' and 'liking people'. It can be reworked later.</p>   | 33 | 142 |
| <p><b>Kinship</b><br/> When people tell they have affinities with certain people, they are more than colleagues in a way. It might include friendship in some cases. Also when people talk about one specific person that they like.</p> <p>Also when people distinguish between colleagues and friends. In this sense it is related to the 'boundary work-life' and/or to the 'dinstinction pro perso'.</p> <p>It might be a subcategory of 'Liking people', which might itself be a subcategory of 'interaction quality-cordiality'. It seems that there is a hierarchy of affect/personal involvement'. But of course sometimes people talk about the three levels at the same time. It may not be so clear to them as well.</p>   | 22 | 52  |
| <p><b>Leaving</b><br/> Leaving accounts for how people are leaving, how they announce they are leaving, how is the departure from the group organised, negotiated, officially and symbolically done.</p> <p>In Comms it also encompasses accounts of people being let go.</p>   | 16 | 46  |
| <p><b>Liking people</b><br/> This category has been created to account for moments in interview when people evoke explicitly or implicitly that they like their colleagues, that they like working with them. Also that they get along well, and that they have bonds. But the sense with Comms has been extended to getting to know people in order to perform one's job better, and also sometimes because it is more agreeable. Both argument are often intertwined.</p> <p>This level can overstep the professional sphere already (as opposed to 'interaction quality-cordiality'), but it is not necessarily the description of a particular relationship with a particular person already, it is not yet the level of friendship. It seems that there is more ambiguity between the different levels of personal involvement with people at work at Comms for the less experienced (eg Anne).</p> <p>It seems that this level requires talking about one's personal life, whereas 'interaction quality-cordiality' does not.</p> <p>It encompasses knowing people (Effie talks about that a lot), then knowing their emotions, it means bonding with them, what the first level of interaction quality-cordiality doesn't require. Also when people evoke that they are alike, this sense of closeness.</p> <p>It can also be evoked negatively as too much affect and not enough objectivity to assess people. Odile in particular, positioning herself as a manager, has this issue.</p> <p>Or also when you don't like people. Then you don't work as well with them (see Paul)</p> | 32 | 144 |
| <p><b>Listening to others</b><br/> When people evoke explicitly the action of listening to others.</p>  | 15 | 28  |
| <p><b>Lunch break</b><br/> Definition: how, when, with whom, people take their lunch break (as an important socializing moment).</p>  | 20 | 49  |
| <p><b>Managing Job Hours</b><br/> Job hours refers both to the quantity of hours that are devoted to the job and how people manage it, or how they don't manage it as sometimes, especially at Comms, it is more imposed to them than anything else. It is naturally linked to 'workload' but not only, also to management of the perso-pro boundary, or to the specific requirements of the job.</p> <p>It can also be linked to time management in general, the time scales, how it constraints the work.</p>   | 29 | 78  |

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| <b>Meetings</b><br>When people talk about work meetings, what they do there, how they unfold, what they're used for   | 23 | 56  |
| <b>Methods</b><br>To keep track of what can be useful to analyse critically the methods.<br>[Only introduced from Christine Serv (early April 2016), so possibly to recode for other interviews.]   | 12 | 38  |
| <b>Not sharing personal life</b><br>This refers to sections where people explain that they don't share their personal life with colleagues, and often justify for not doing it. It is very close to 'sharing (personal)' because many times people explain that you have to find the line, so sharing but not too much. There are many reasons not to share and it is not necessarily because people don't care. This is a very delicate issue.   | 24 | 62  |
| <b>Obtaining holidays</b><br>About the management of taking days off (that are granted in numbers by the legal work contracts but for which the period has to be negotiated).   | 7  | 8   |
| <b>One's place</b><br>This category encompasses the accounts of the need for finding one's place, or being at a relevant (symbolic) place.  | 19 | 55  |
| <b>Organisation size</b><br>When people evoke the size of the organization as an explanation, a factor that contributes to their observations.  | 10 | 27  |
| <b>Outfits</b><br>When people talk about the way people at work dress, or anything related to their appearances.  | 8  | 14  |
| <b>Performing-producing</b><br>In this category stands the success (economic, marketing) of the organisation as well as of the team. The difference with the category 'individual performance' is that here people are considering the performance at the collective level (even if sometimes implicitly relying on individual productions). So the difference here is the perspective taken: who benefits from the production. So it also encompasses general rules on the conditions that allow to work best. Lots of preconceived ideas about that because of the myth of the happy productive worker.<br><br>For some people the two categories overlap more than for others. Shows also the collective/individual spirit.<br><br>It also encompasses accounts of performance, for example financial, commercial.<br><br>At Serv it was mainly evoked to describe for-profit companies, in contrast with what they are doing, but also sometimes to describe the increased managerial practices in social services. The production is thought at the collective level, for the team, there is no instances of individual performance issues. This would be thought only as a capacity, and then is in the category 'personal resource' or 'work quality'.<br><br>At Comms it happens that individual performance and Performing-producing (at the level of the organisation then) are in conflict. Or maybe it is the different individual performances that have divergent interests (eg. commercial and creatives, cf. Pierre's interview).<br><br>Also in this category the capacity to motivate others to make them work well. So part of relational skills/endeavour.<br><br>Also professional consciousness (=professionalism?)<br><br>Also distinguish with "pressure" ? | 32 | 230 |

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| <p><b>Personal issues at work</b></p> <p>This nodes has been created during the first re-coding phase (after the coding of 15 interviews, first 10 from Serv and second 5 from Comms) to account for people talking about how personal issues affect work. These chunks had first been allocated to the 'personal life' category but then the latter was deemed inconsistent and so the creation of this new category.</p> <p>As opposed to 'personal life' here deals with specifically when problem at home affect work, or how to make sure they won't affect work. Whereas the former was rather about knowing each other in general, bonding by exchanging on personal life. But very often they overlap. In particular when they begin to say that it is nice to get interest in each other, often they need to justify saying that problem at home will affect work. Or (people at Serv especially) when they talk about people having personal issues, they talk about them talking about it or not at work, or also they recall talking themselves with people who are not well because of personal issues.</p>  | 20 | 40  |
| <p><b>Personal life</b></p> <p>This node is used for both people who talk about their private life during the interview, or the private life of others, and people who tell that they talk about their private life with colleagues (or that they are not!).</p> <p>When people talk about the private lives of colleagues (only at Serv) that shows that first they know about it, and second they think it is relevant in the frame of the interview. But I am not sure how to use the fact to talk about their private life during interview as it is a specific setting, very different from observing people talking about their private life at work.</p> <p>Of course it overlaps a lot with the category 'boundary work-life' but not always. This category really shows when people talk about personal life, and then in which circumstances they do so. They don't necessarily evoke the management of the boundary, even if of course implicitly one can interpret and see that there is a boundary or not in the fact that they talk about personal lives at work or not.</p> <p>It seems that at Comms people talk more theoretically about that (talking about personal life is/is not good) than at Serv. But isn't it the case for all topic in the end?</p> | 33 | 152 |
| <p><b>Personal resource</b></p> <p>When people talk about the psychological, affective, resources that are needed to do one's job. It is more critical at Serv on a personal point of view because the personal resources might be threatened by the job itself, whereas at Comms it is more a matter of performing at work.</p>  | 20 | 56  |
| <p><b>PR services</b></p> <p>Relative to the content of the job in PR or the specificity of the department.</p>   | 7  | 39  |
| <p><b>Pregnancy</b></p> <p>When people evoke explicitly pregnancy.</p>  | 9  | 12  |
| <p><b>Reciprocity</b></p> <p>When people evoke explicitly the norm of reciprocity.</p>  | 13 | 16  |
| <p><b>Relation manager</b></p> <p>This category refers to examples of relations with people higher or lower in the hierarchy. It distinguishes then from 'role hierarchy' that is more generally on what is the people higher in the hierarchy supposed to do and their responsibility on the way people interact with each other, not only on their own relationship with their subordinates.</p> <p>How people are interacting with managers. What is the right way to interact with hierarchy, what is the right way for the manager to interact with his subordinates. So then sometimes it overlaps with "role manager" because many people (at Comms) mix the relational with the performance at work.</p>  | 34 | 124 |
| <p><b>Relational endeavour</b></p> <p>When people talk about the efforts that one has to do to enhance good relations at work. Comprises also when they say they are reluctant to make this effort.</p> <p>[Close to 'relational skills'?]</p> <p>It also includes efforts that people make (or should make) to be positive, joyful, as it is required by the behavioral norms. When it is conscious, meaning not natural necessarily (not liking people?)</p>  | 27 | 90  |
| <p><b>Relational skills</b></p> <p>To tell that it is not so easy to be a people's person, that some people have skills for that.</p>   | 21 | 52  |

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| <p><b>Respect</b><br/>When people talk about respect at work. It seems quite an abstracted category.</p> <p>Was created under Comms coding, does it mean that there are no such occurrences at Serv?<br/>Is it a subcategory of relationships quality?</p> <p>Politeness also enters this category (except when it is about saying hello, then it is into 'greetings')</p>   | 27 | 62  |
| <p><b>Responsibility</b><br/>When people talk about what is at stake in the performing of their work. Seems to be only at Serv.</p> <p>From Odile interview (01/05/17) I use it as well for responsibility towards colleagues.</p>   | 24 | 55  |
| <p><b>Role clients</b><br/>How clients determine their behavior. Sometimes a real-life example of the interactions with clients, sometimes a more abstracted account of how they influence people's relational behaviors.</p> <p>Also includes accounts of economic constraints.</p> <p>[distinguish from abstracted accounts of economic constraints]</p>   | 19 | 86  |
| <p><b>Role gender</b><br/>When people evoke gender as an explanation for a type of behavior.</p>   | 6  | 8   |
| <p><b>Role manager</b><br/>It is interesting how people talk spontaneously of the manager when invoking work ambiance.</p> <p>This category encompasses different hierarchy, mostly the direct manager but sometimes higher levels as well.</p> <p>It is also triggered by the scenarios, the first one talking about a job 'à responsabilités'.</p> <p>08/09/15<br/>It is a category that goes over very different things actually, and that at least encompasses the work itself (how the manager makes people work on this or on that, in this way or another) and then the relations with people. It is a good location to think about the process. But maybe it will need some redivisions to help thinking about it because it is very broad at this moment.</p> <p>15/01/2016<br/>Then I re-code this category to extract 'relation manager', as opposed to the role of a manager in general, including all the authority execution, and so on. So I change the name from 'role hierarchy' to 'role manager'. So 'role hierarchy' is when people talk about the role of the manager on either the work or on the ambiance at work and so on. It is everything that describes the behavior of the manager at work, but it doesn't focus on the quality of the relationship (even if it is sometimes implicit).</p> <p>Also some things re-coded to 'social groups-hierarchy'. When people say the level of hierarchy changes the way to interact, implicitly or explicitly. That you have to abide by the hierarchy.</p> <p>16/01/2016<br/>Aurélié interview is very representative of the mix between the manger's relation and his professional role.</p> <p>In the end I don't feel so good with the separation "role manager"/"relation manager", because both are often mixed. Probably I will have to come back to it later when I have new theoretical insights.</p> <p>Also it includes accounts of managers saying what they thing their role is.</p> <p>At Comms the code "freedom at work" has to be looked at also to see what the role of the manager is not.</p> <p>29/02/16<br/>Interesting to look at it from a role theory perspective.</p> | 36 | 193 |

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| <p><b>Sector Com</b><br/>When people explain what 'the agencies' are but also when they talk about the nature of their job (except for PR which has a specific category for itself). Also when people talk about the company culture, maybe to separate later. There they describe how is Comms, what it does, sometimes in a strategic point of view.</p> <p>Also other instances that make me think about the specificities of Comms, or of the sector. Like how international people are, or how smart they are. Also how fancy the job is (like talking directly to a Minister). This might be to redevise later at the light of the observations.</p>   | 23 | 146 |
| <p><b>Self-interest</b><br/>In opposition to team spirit.<br/>Also quite close to helping, as an antagonist.</p> <p>At Serv this is more seldom in the sense that not helping others is not for one's own interest but rather for the interest of one's work (quality of the work) so it can not really be qualified of self-interest. But pb in this matter will then rather be under the 'work coordination' issues. There are some overlap when it is not clear why people would not coordinate, and maybe it would serve their interest. However the stake of career advancement is quite clear at Comms, it is not evoked at all at Serv.</p> <p>It also encompasses 'being able to work in team', to work together, as it is very often described along with workign for oneself. Then it is also about the opposition btw individualism and collectivism.</p> | 24 | 46  |
| <p><b>Services rivalry</b><br/>When people evoke the rivalry between services as something that emerge from the interaction with people of this service. It seems to be a category proper to Serv and its relation with the other social service with whom they share the building.</p>  | 9  | 16  |
| <p><b>Sharing (personal)</b><br/>When people exchange with colleagues about nonwork topics. At Serv it includes very personal discussions, at Comms it is rather casual (eg: weather talks) but it is distinguished from exchanging strictly on work topics.</p>   | 32 | 95  |
| <p><b>Smoking</b><br/>When people talk about the habit of smoking, usually as coffee, it is about talking with people.</p>   | 6  | 8   |
| <p><b>Social groups-Hierarchy</b><br/>This category was created when beginning to code Comms interviews to account for the report of informal differences of social status in the organisation. Sometimes it is only said implicitly.</p> <p>Overlap with 'Fairness': sometimes the unfairness is evoked as a claim for abolishing the social groups hierarchy, it seems to be the case at Serv, but not so much at Comms (after only 5 interviews).</p> <p>But most of the time, at Comms, the social status hierarchy is implicitly evoked and as such not put into question as unfair.</p> <p>It also encompasses accounts of different ways to behave with people according to their hierarchy in the organization.</p>  | 31 | 121 |
| <p><b>Social network</b><br/>Refers to knowing people in the company or outside but for professional purpose. So it is about the number of people you know, the width, rather than the breadth. Of course what starts as just knowing who is who and who does what can evolve in something more, but here it is the first level: being able then to use people for one's job.</p>  | 19 | 43  |
| <p><b>Social services</b><br/>The category social services encompasses both when people directly refer to it, to the social dimension of their work, but also when they describe the challenges of the work, the common issues, how the child protection works.</p> <p>In this category might be as well the sensemaking that they are trying to perform as the basis of their job, so as to know what to do to protect the child to the best of their capacity.</p> <p>Also emerges how much they dig into personal lives of people to do their job.</p>  | 13 | 91  |
| <p><b>Space configuration</b><br/>When people evoke the space configuration spontaneously.</p>   | 28 | 76  |

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| <p><b>Talking about work relations</b><br/>This category encompasses accounts of previous discussions with colleagues and/or during meeting about the way they interact with each other at work, what they should possibly do to improve it.</p>   | 13 | 18  |
| <p><b>Tchat</b><br/>When people say they use the instantaneous messaging (chatting). Then it is only at Comms.<br/><br/>Apparently it is not a real exchange, it is more information exchange, than sharing.</p>   | 5  | 9   |
| <p><b>Team belonging</b><br/>Team belonging refers to the expression of a group: it can be the sense of we-ness, it can be contrasting one's group with others. For the secretaries vs the social worker at Serv I hesitate between this code and "social groups-hierarchy" as well.<br/><br/>It also encompasses the solidarity in-between the team. Possibly to separate later.</p>  | 27 | 105 |
| <p><b>Team size</b><br/>When people evoke explicitly the size of the team as a factor determining interpersonal behaviors.</p>   | 16 | 38  |
| <p><b>Time scale</b><br/>Everything that is related to the pace of things happening.<br/>[only added on the 07/04/16 from Bjorn interview, so possibly to recode]</p>  | 6  | 13  |
| <p><b>Trust</b><br/>In this category stand both the explicit evocations of 'trust' between colleagues, or between a manager and their subordinates, and the more implicit emergence of trust as relying on people and feeling safe in one's organisation (or the opposit: feeling in danger).<br/><br/>What is particular with trust is that it transcends the personal-professional barrier: you feel you like somebody hence you trust him, but rationally accounts here are about work, how you trust the person will provide good work. So it is both about feeling good and about cooperation.</p>  | 19 | 40  |
| <p><b>Turnover</b><br/>Turnover accounts for turnover in the organisation (being called turnover or only relating who is there for so much time and so on). It also encompasses when people talks about quitting their job, getting a new one, concretely doing so. So it gives example of reasons why people move. In this latter sense it overlaps with 'career', but in a more objective way, less about progression or motivation for this or this job.</p>  | 24 | 51  |
| <p><b>Vouvoiement</b><br/>When discussion of saying 'tu' or 'vous' to people at work.</p>  | 15 | 20  |
| <p><b>Wellbeing</b><br/>When people explicitly evoke people's wellbeing. Or mental health issue. Close to "work strain" in that sense.</p>   | 27 | 89  |
| <p><b>Work at home</b><br/>When people tell that they are doing some tasks of their job at home, sometimes merely thinking about the right way to do this or that.</p>   | 12 | 17  |
| <p><b>Work coordination</b><br/>Work coordination could also be labeled work cooperation. It accounts for endeavour to work together for the realisation of a task, so as to improve the work quality or the overall performance.<br/><br/>It also accounts for different ways of working for similar (or identical) tasks among different people (which is the case at Serv in particular where people may have exactly the same job).<br/><br/>It also encompasses initiatives to improve the collaboration.<br/><br/>In the negative side it might be close to the category 'self-interest', in the implicit assumption that people don't coordinate because they want to have it their way, and bothering about other people working on the case may hinder their capacity to do what they want (and also maybe to gain credit for the case). In the positive side it can be close to 'helping'.<br/><br/>It appears to be quite close to 'fairness' also sometimes, because work coordination is also considering a fair allocation of work tasks, and a consideration of every one involved.</p> | 29 | 103 |

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| <p><b>Work engagement</b></p> <p>This category relates to how much people tell and/or show they are implicated in their work. It can be how much effort they put to reach the extra mile, or on the contrary the difficulty they have to put boundaries to their personal involvement (in time, in personal resources, in energy).</p> <p>It can be linked with 'work at home'.</p>   | 22 | 58  |
| <p><b>Work liking-satisfaction</b></p> <p>In the case of Comms people this category will encompass the question of salary a lot. It also includes not liking one's job.</p>   | 31 | 96  |
| <p><b>Work quality</b></p> <p>Work quality encompasses both the expression of a concern for the quality of the work and also sometimes an appraisal of the quality of the work of others, in this case then it is very close to skill or competence. And then may overlap sometimes the category "Experienced", only in this case it is really when people refer directly to their experience.</p> <p>But it is different from colleagues judgment in which a social value judgment is applied rather than the judgment of the product of work.</p> <p>TO DO: This category is applied too broadly at Serv, needs to be redefined (with skills for example and with social work when people describe what their work is about)</p>  | 28 | 108 |
| <p><b>Work skills</b></p> <p>Work skills refers to the theme of being good or not at one's job. It encompasses then learning new skills, it is also close to work quality but here the focus is not on the outcome but more on the person herself, as a value judgment on oneself or others. In this sense it is close to the code colleagues judgement, but the latter will be more when the judgment is overtly evoked, not just implied (people tell me I am... people think I am... I have to look good...).</p> <p>Also at Serv it is expressed quite differently, more about being enriched, having more resources.</p>   | 24 | 73  |
| <p><b>Work strain</b></p> <p>I might have conjectured a bit on this category: the idea is to notice when people talk about the pressure and seem to be anxious or suffer from it, because of resources or time lacking or because they don't feel able to do it. Different from 'responsibility' where people recognize the significance of their job but it might or might not be lived as a strain. I inspire a lot from psychosocial models of stress. Maybe I need to separate from work difficulty. At Serv it encompasses the harshness of situation, and especially when they feel they don't have any solution at all, they are failing.</p> <p>This category encompasses the occurrence of urgent tasks, but only when they seem to be anxious about it. Otherwise it will rather be in 'workload'.</p>  | 33 | 188 |
| <p><b>Workload</b></p> <p>This category collects people's account of the quantity of the work they have, either explicitly or sometimes implicitly (like I get to work immediately when I arrive). Or when they evoke it as a work condition. It also encompasses urgent tasks as they immediately increase the workload.</p> <p>Sometimes they talk about it to describe how they need help or how they help each other. It flows from the 2nd scenario as well. They also talk about it as an excuse for not taking more care of each other at work. They don't have time for this.</p> <p>At Comms this category overlaps often 'Producing-performing', as it seems there is an endless quantity of work that can be done, as a 'production' because the raw material is endless (as long as you first gain contracts and clients). Whereas at Serv there is more a determined quantity of raw material (even if varying) and the workload will be more linked to improving the quality of the work (at least in discourses).</p> <p>At Serv it includes the diary exercise (finding dates, organising appointments, meetings, etc).</p> | 35 | 123 |

## Observations:

| Label<br>Description and reflexive notes  | Sources | References |
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| <p><b>Advertising</b><br/>Creativity is a core value here. And the instruments of creativity are the creative people ("les creas"). So they have to defend their position sometimes, I could see with consulting working with them on several topics that they don't take it from anybody, but it is very implicit though. And also creativity is the topic where people are managing susceptibilities. Meetings in Sebastien's office are definitively the ones with the most tension that I have been to.</p> <p>But also Sebastien is very stressful in terms of social interaction, he makes people unsecure because you have a definite feeling that he is not going to follow the normal office social rules, even relatively to the Comms social rules which are quite informal and infused with coolness already. But being nice with people is also a norm and it is easy to feel that people are afraid that Sebastien is not going to follow this one (according also to people's talk during interviews).</p> | 19      | 59         |
| <p><b>Authenticity</b><br/>This code refers to people showing their true colors or on the opposite concealing who they really are, what they feel or what they think (in a purposeful way, as opposed to the everyday theatre of life).</p> <p>Maybe it will be useful to separate into the two opposed poles later.</p> <p>I realise that I don't code much on this while coding for Serv. Maybe it is a higher level coding.</p>  | 25      | 61         |
| <p><b>Bodies</b><br/>Everything in my notes that refers to positions, gestures, positionings. Of course the films can later be analysed more fine grained in this perspective but here it is only about the notes that I have taken while reiewing the films.</p> <p>But it also encompasses space configuration.</p>   | 18      | 64         |
| <p><b>Bonding</b><br/>When people develop relations that touch the personal sides of them. It is very easy intuitively to differentiate between just being polite, convivial, pleasant and actually bonding, meaning connecting at a deeper level. But interestingly it is much harder to distinguish theoretically.</p>  | 10      | 25         |
| <p><b>Busy-Productive</b><br/>Refers to how busy they are, how productive they are as well. Also sometimes refers to pressure to do tasks in constrained time. Also includes the opposite: quiet time, not so much work (however it is much more rare), but then people are worried, it doesn't look good.</p> <p>It often encompasses moments when people do several things at the same time (eg. Pierre at Allianz meeting, Loyal conducting two meetings at the same time).</p> <p>It includes stress about success, pressure on financial aspects.</p> <p>It includes efficiency before all (in this sense close to work hegemony).</p>   | 44      | 243        |
| <p><b>Calendar-timetable</b><br/>At Serv calendars and timetable discussions are central. It is a recurrent issue because of the nature of the job but also because of many people working part time. I include also the outside appointments in this category, that make them being out of office often.</p>   | 19      | 86         |
| <p><b>Celebrating</b><br/>Refers to moments when they are celebrating together, more or less important events.</p>  | 10      | 24         |

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| <b>Child protection</b><br>Directly related to the mission of protecting children and the corresponding work tasks.  | 40 | 63  |
| <b>Client</b><br>All that is related to the clients being there, on the phone, or when they talk about them.<br>Sometimes it is not easy to distinguish between talking about the people or about the company of the clients.<br><br>They mock the clients a lot, it seems it is a way to let go some steam, as they always have to treat them so well, to make such efforts for them, they sometimes need to make fun of them (like the bouffon of the king).   | 19 | 123 |
| <b>Co-elaboration</b><br>[Comms: recode for this before (began on the 22nd of october)<br><br>It seems quite close to meetings, especially project meetings (Comms) and synthesis (Serv): where people elaborate meaning.<br><br>Also at Comms it can be close to creativity, I need maybe to track this down, also from Pleasure to work for instance.  | 23 | 190 |
| <b>Coffee machine</b><br>Related to making or having coffee at work. A social activity.  | 14 | 29  |
| <b>Complaining</b><br>When people are voicing complaints, mostly about the job. Can be direct complaints or implicit criticizing.  | 19 | 70  |
| <b>Complimenting</b><br>When people say nice things to each other. Sometimes it relates to "evaluating" but sometimes it is just unbiased compliments as a relational endeavour.   | 15 | 28  |
| <b>Conflict-Disagreement</b><br>When people are fighting, when they disagree. But also when they don't like each others.   | 25 | 131 |
| <b>Considering</b><br>When people are very tactful, show respect, show politeness, show that the humanity is recognized in the other. Or the opposite, possible to distinguish later.  | 19 | 43  |
| <b>Consulting</b><br>The job is quite difficult. You have to please clients all the time. you have to show how good you are (eg. MAF and Allianz workshops)  | 33 | 124 |
| <b>Convincing</b><br>Convincing people is a great part of the job (at least in consulting and Ad). Of course social status plays a role: people recognize the superiority of other people, but from observations it is not clear if it is from official status or from being recognized as good. Supposedly both overlap but not necessarily. And actually the politeness formula, the tactfulness, is a sign of official difference in status, but not a convincing element per se, as opposed to the appraisal of smartness. | 16 | 38  |
| <b>Conviviality-friendliness</b><br>People being cordial, convivial, and even friendly. I only apply this category when I feel something genuine, if it is for a specific goal, I would rather apply the category "good with people" for example, or 'networking'.<br><br>At Serv it applies a lot to meetings where people talk at the same time, there are different conversations in parallel. There is no hierarchy and order, but mess and sociality.   | 35 | 202 |
| <b>Coordinating</b><br>At Serv, for when they engage actively in coordination activities. It may be close to 'co-elaboration', only there it refers really to more practical things like timetables coordination between people and information exchange. Then it may overlap with "calendar-timetable"  | 18 | 32  |
| <b>Criticizing</b><br>When people from Serv overtly criticize other entities, being partners or their colleagues from other entities inside the building. It is sometimes close to 'standing out' as criticizing others allow for distinguishing oneself from them.<br><br>Also, it needs checking if that overlaps 'evaluating'. It seems that 'criticizing' would rather be for partners, other professionals, and 'evaluating' for the users (children, parents).   | 22 | 113 |

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| <p><b>Devices</b><br/>Refers to the use of devices being laptops, phones or even simply boards, printed presentations and so on. This is particularly noticeable as they don't "produce" anything material, however the physical artefacts are still quite important.</p> <p>At Serv they use different kinds of 'devices', more often diaries, papers (like contracts) but they are as central to the interaction.</p>   | 25 | 100 |
| <p><b>Difficult-struggling</b><br/>This code has been created for Serv coding to notify when they have trouble doing something. So that may be when they are failing with a situation, or more casually about the complicated practicalities like distances between the family and the foster care venue, or the administrative complications to obtain funding. Also sometimes because of they're lack of skills (they don't understand something, they are unable to do something).</p> <p>I start to use it for Comms as well on the feedback fieldnotes for all the things that fail, even though, interestingly, they always manage to give them a 'not failing' sense. For instance often associated with people who get fired (or their short term contract not continued).</p> <p>I code with this a lot at Serv because they are easily negative in their assessment of the situation, whereas at Comms it is important to be always positive.</p>   | 20 | 140 |
| <p><b>Discrete</b><br/>Accounts for behaviour of people being discrete, staying in the background, whether because timid or for specific purpose in the task. Happens mostly at Serv.</p>   | 6  | 15  |
| <p><b>Emotions</b><br/>When I describe the occurrence of emotions. Sometimes not easy to disentangle from 'negative feelings' or 'positive feelings'. But I guess 'emotions' is when it is somewhat stronger, also more a gut reaction, less the result of thinking negatively/positively.</p>  | 18 | 72  |
| <p><b>Encouraging</b><br/>Occurrences of people encouraging, supporting other people.</p>   | 12 | 15  |
| <p><b>Enthusiasm-Cheerfulness</b><br/>When people show enthusiasm for the work.</p> <p>I never code for that at Serv because it is more teasing, humor on cynicism rather than real enthusiasm. It is never all positive, it is always more emotional</p>   | 18 | 58  |
| <p><b>Evaluating</b><br/>When they evaluate their work, being their work, their teamwork, or other's work. As well as when they evaluate people directly.</p> <p>Sometimes it also encompasses evaluating people's behavior (he/she should have not do that, is ridiculous, etc.).</p> <p>At Serv it largely deals with evaluating people's mental state. Mainly on users (children and parents) but also on foster families, and sometimes colleagues but then in a much more benevolent way, only as a mean to support them in their tasks. I am wondering to what extent I might be biased though in the application of 'evaluating' for Serv where I would have sometimes put 'busy-productive' or 'figures' at Comms. The production at Serv is children's development and wellbeing, then it is hard to apply the productive label, but still there is instrumentality in the use of workers to provide this outcome, so I will have to reevaluate this underlying ethical judgment.</p> <p>[check when 'co-elaboration' or 'explaining-sensegiving' might actually overlap with 'evaluating']</p> <p>In the Serv' team people take care of each other, so they assess the needs of each other but they don't assess their performance, or at least they don't talk about it and they don't show it. Evaluating people's performance seems pointless. I know that Gilles has his ideas of who is good and not good and it transpires a bit in the status of each person in the group but it is very subtil, and it doesn't give anybody's more right to anything or less attention.</p> | 24 | 149 |

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| <p><b>Explaining-Giving sense</b><br/>The code refers to people actively bringing sense to a situation, a meeting, in a statement-like way, as opposed to asking questions and seeking actively others' input to help oneself make sense, which would then enter the category 'co-elaboration'. The difference is orientation: does the sensegiver position itself as a sender or as a recipient.</p> <p>A significant part of Serv' job is to talk to people, to make people understand, to give sense to the situation. So they do it a lot with users and foster families, but also sometimes also with partners during meetings. This is intrinsically part of the cure: things have to make sense.</p> <p>I'm wondering if I don't tend to code Gilles (manager)'s explanations as 'explaining-giving sense' and other people as 'co-elaboration'. Possibly it reflects reality because Gilles is an active sensegiver but also it is possible that I anticipate the authority effect here.</p> | 18 | 88 |
| <p><b>Fame</b><br/>Refers to the company being famous and fancy, demonstrating high social status of the members and making it desirable also for clients.</p> <p>Also in this category the occurrence of events/artefacts showing that we are in a high-maintenance organisation [true for consulting and advertising especially?]</p>  | 22 | 79 |
| <p><b>Figures</b><br/>This refers to the organization having no practice of figures: no performance figures are displayed, even number of employees, the culture is very qualitative.</p> <p>Will code also when people evoke directly profitability or number of clients, anything that relates to piloting the activity.</p>   | 22 | 48 |
| <p><b>Fluidity-Easiness</b><br/>This stands for everything that goes easily whereas it could have been hard (like administrative procedures, or deadline constraints), how things seem to flow naturally. Nothing is difficult. Just do it.</p> <p>In this category I also put when people exhibit brightness and virtuosity at work.</p> <p>But then since everything is supposed to be easy, effortless, then it would be lame to take care of people, it would make them appear as weak. A masculine culture?</p> <p>The only thing that contrasts with this fluidity-easiness is the HR department. Marjorie explains to me that the labor law clashes with the group functioning.</p>   | 17 | 55 |
| <p><b>Good with people</b><br/>This is certainly related to "looking good" but I felt the need to create a separate category, especially to describe how they are doing with clients, and all the relational skills they display to appear attractive, pleasant, and please them.</p>  | 17 | 38 |
| <p><b>Greetings</b><br/>Observations of how people greet each other when meeting in the beginning of the day or leaving at the end of the day.</p>   | 15 | 38 |
| <p><b>Harshness (situations)</b><br/>This code applies only to Serv. It could be a subtheme in the code 'child protection'. It refers to observations of the suffering and social impairment of the children and their families.</p>   | 12 | 55 |
| <p><b>Helping</b><br/>Refers to people engaging in actions to help other people, or not.</p> <p>At Serv it also includes supporting other people's positions, as they spend lots of time elaborating representations of the situations and the right measures to follow. Or how they complement each other in particular situations (like when one is more tired and the others will take the lead). I even included complicit looks, but maybe it should be another category, when people understand each other without having to be explicit, maybe when they understand each other at the X-system level.</p>   | 26 | 94 |

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| <p><b>Hierarchy-Authority</b><br/> Stands for official hierarchy. Than at Serv often the bureaucracy of the local authority.<br/> [re-code here btw self-organizing, and child protection, and Social status-informal hierarchy]</p>   | 27 | 83  |
| <p><b>Foster families</b><br/> Foster families are not part of the team, and are not studied as such here. However they are external elements impacting drastically on their job, almost as much as the users of the service.</p>  | 12 | 50  |
| <p><b>HR</b><br/> All that is related to the HR department or the HR Director.</p>   | 29 | 113 |
| <p><b>Humor</b><br/> Humor is used very often, both at Comms and at Serv and I tended to take extensive notes of this, certainly because it was pleasant moment, but also because the kind of humor used says a lot about the ambiance as well. It seems that at Serv cynism and irony is much more used than at Comms. Maybe it is used instead of 'negative feelings' there, humor to cheer people up because if you don't use humor then it is only very sad. Also at Serv humor is often used as a provocation. Also it marks the high level of criticism from the head of service (towards everybody except his team).</p>  | 34 | 191 |
| <p><b>Individualism</b><br/> Refers to people looking after their own interest and distinguishing from the team or the organization interest.</p>  | 11 | 31  |
| <p><b>Informality-coolness</b><br/> Codes for what makes feel like a bunch of lads, rather than colleagues in a very serious company.</p> <p>It seems that the advertising department is the epitome of this aspect of the company culture, as can be seen for example in the email sent by people leaving the company (to everybody in the company) who look like they are set to friends, in a very informal way. Leaving emails from people from Consulting are not that informal and funny.</p> <p>At Serv the informality is more casual than cool (in the fame sense).</p> <p>I am wondering why the informality struck me more at Comms than at Serv. I think it is more unexpected considering the fame (building, location, social origin of people, etc). And also at Serv it is beyond informality, it is like friends hanging out sometimes.</p> | 52 | 177 |
| <p><b>Informing</b><br/> When communicating specific content, so when the purpose of the interaction is clearly and foremost to pass on information.</p>   | 23 | 48  |
| <p><b>International</b><br/> Related to the international activities at work and how multi-cultural the workplace is. A sharp contrast between Serv and Comms.</p>   | 19 | 71  |
| <p><b>Leaving</b><br/> Refers to when people are leaving the organisation.</p>   | 21 | 64  |
| <p><b>Liking people</b><br/> Refers to people showing they like (or don't like), or have special connections with some particular others.</p>  | 18 | 36  |
| <p><b>Looking good</b><br/> This relates to looking good on all aspects: phycially, or being good at one's job, or getting along with people. Then in general being all positive.</p> <p>[differentiate between the different aspects, like looking smart and expert, and being liked, having good relationships with people]</p> <p>At PR it seems that people are desperate not too look bad, there is a climate of fear.</p> <p>At Serv Gilles wants to look good all the time (good at his job, knowing things), he is especially trying to impress me it seems.</p>   | 35 | 169 |
| <p><b>Loud-Quiet</b><br/> Refers to observations when a situation, a person, a team, was unusually quiet or loud. Related to the culture of self-enhancement, discretion and so on.</p>  | 17 | 32  |

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| <p><b>Lunch</b><br/>This codes relate to the social practice of lunch at work, going out or staying, sharing with colleagues or not, talking about work or not, etc.</p>   | 21 | 61  |
| <p><b>Manager</b><br/>This refers to the manager-subordinate relationship, as the official hierarchical relation. But there are overlaps with "Social status-informal hierarchy" as of course sometimes it is not clear whether the authority is blankly implemented or if there is a real recognition and need of the expertise of the manager and that is why people submit themselves to her.</p> <p>At Serv it applies to the manager of the team almost only, because higher level managers are nowhere to be seen, so they exist through the authority, how they rule the job of people from Serv, in an explicit, official manner, but they don't interact personally with them (they are not in the same building for a start).</p> <p>Also my problem to distinguish here with "social status-hierarchy" is that I can't tell if the leadership of Gilles is due to his social status or to his official authority as manager. During synthesis with external partners for instance I don't know if he is supposed to have a authority, but for sure he has a higher status.</p> <p>[check the implementation: at Serv it applies to everything that is related to Gilles (a lot!) whereas at Comms I am not sure that it applies to managers all the time, or only when they do managing things. So I have to check for first week until beginning of second week]</p> | 39 | 413 |
| <p><b>Managing susceptibilities</b><br/>Is it only applied to creative people?</p>   | 14 | 20  |
| <p><b>Mental wellbeing</b><br/>Refers to employee's wellbeing. This theme is mostly observed at Serv where people explicitly discuss concerns for being well and how the work can impact negatively on their mental health. Discussion also about mental health from the HR Director at Comms.</p>   | 10 | 31  |
| <p><b>Negative feelings</b><br/>A melting pot of different negative emotions. To be used either to show prominence of emotions, but also need to analyse the different emotions included.</p> <p>[sort out 'not liking people']</p>  | 23 | 114 |
| <p><b>Negotiating access</b><br/>Reflections of my own efforts to negotiate access or maintain access and how it impacts the data collection, and people's behaviours.</p>   | 48 | 178 |
| <p><b>Networking</b><br/>Refers to people's efforts to develop or maintain their network, hence appear favorably to certain people, and work on the relationships with them. Has been observed mostly at Comms.</p>  | 17 | 53  |
| <p><b>Newcomers</b><br/>When about people who just arrived.<br/>But also sometimes to talk about inexperience (people who arrived in less than a year or so)</p>   | 16 | 37  |
| <p><b>Not considering</b><br/>Result of recoding 'considering (or not)' to distinguish between the two opposite pole.</p>  | 10 | 19  |
| <p><b>Not helping</b><br/>Result of recoding 'helping (or not)' to distinguish between the two opposite pole.</p>  | 12 | 22  |
| <p><b>Office configuration</b><br/>Usually to describe offices and how their configuration shapes the interaction. Occasionally also to talk about people's places or negotiation for offices. For example at PR people take other's desks quite easily apparently.</p> <p>Also in consulting I sat at Joséphine's desk without any problem, I asked her before she went on holiday if I could take her sit and she was totally fine with it, as if it was even an awkward question to ask.</p> <p>Also sometimes to describe role of space (like being there or there)</p>  | 35 | 143 |
| <p><b>Openness</b><br/>How people in the organisation are open to new ideas, new ways of doing, like what is different.</p>  | 15 | 23  |

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| <b>Performing speech</b><br>How some job tasks are performed only through speaking. Hence the importance of speaking to perform work.  | 5  | 17  |
| <b>Personal constraints</b><br>Refers to how personal constraints impede the work, either people talking about it (to avoid or to acknowledge) or observations of it happening.  | 19 | 39  |
| <b>Personal life</b><br>When personal life of people is explicitly or implicitly evoked. It encompasses the question of holidays.<br><br>Also it seems that is the space where you don't have to do this or this, doesn't mean that it is totally work free but that work has not a direct power on it.<br><br>Does higher status allows for more personal stuff at work? (like when Rona and Jeanne joke with Matheo but Clarisse interrupts asking Matheo to do stuff).  | 39 | 177 |
| <b>Personal resources</b><br>How personal resources (mental or material) are used for work purpose.  | 9  | 25  |
| <b>Pleasure to work</b><br>When I observe that they enjoy themselves working. It is possibly embedded in "positive feelings"   | 20 | 46  |
| <b>Poor-plain</b><br>This category refers to the simplicity of the milieu in which they are. For instance a few euros is a sum to consider, or getting a job at a very precarious and low-skilled job is a huge victory for the young they follow. Also how unfashion they can be.<br><br>It also encompasses the seriousness of official way to communicate, when written communications. So that was more about the environment of Serv, the bureaucratic local authority, than the local entity of Serv itself where there was more resistance to bureaucracy.  | 22 | 74  |
| <b>Positive feelings</b><br>How people experience or display positive feelings.<br>[it could be interesting to try to re-devide the different types of feelings]   | 17 | 50  |
| <b>PR</b><br>People talk sometimes about their personal life but only the very casual. It seems it looks good to talk to people. Maybe because they are in PR they know it is nice to do casual conversations (as opposed as Consulting where they don't seem to know that). But it is only very superficial bonding (at least in Septembre), I can't feel people really enjoying being with each other. And it is the same for lunch, there are some people that have lunch together, but not everybody, it seems there are groups, not everyone is invited. Still lunch counts and people don't seem to eat at their desks (as opposed to Consulting).<br><br>The job doesn't require to work in teams so much. They are at their desk most of the time. They have sometimes appointments outside but it is quite rare and apparently for the more senior people.<br><br>The boss is seating in the open-plan office with them which is quite unusual and it is easy to see how it makes things less convivial, more stressful.<br><br>The ambiance was very different in August as opposed to Septembre.<br><br>In October people seem desperate to bond, to connect to each other. I feel a climate of fear as well. | 17 | 48  |
| <b>Psychoanalysis</b><br>Mention or use of psychoanalytic concepts and reasoning. Only at Serv.  | 7  | 42  |
| <b>Researcher's Positioning</b><br>Notes related to how I find my place (or not) in the setting. Also related to impact on validity or merely how it orients my observations.  | 34 | 304 |

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| <p><b>Responsibility for others</b><br/> At Serv people feel the heavy responsibility for people's lives (Users), and this impacts a lot the organizing of the team.</p> <p>At Comms I would rather talk about people being 'in charge' whereas at Serv I talk about people being 'responsible for'.</p> <p>What happens a lot then is a sharing of responsibility among the team members.</p> <p>Then at Serv this category applies to instances when people fear to be wrong about their decision on a particular child.</p> <p>That also includes when they talk about working better, but that is a bit of a stretch maybe it would be better to distinguish form work quality, but then how come it didn't appear at Comms? Possibly because work quality issues where assigned in the 'client' category (work quality=satisfying the client).</p> <p>[check at Comms if anything is like that: like responsibility for co-workers. For sure the relation to client is very different because there is no responsibility there]</p> | 15 | 60 |
| <p><b>Self-control</b><br/> This node refers to the disciplining of one's emotions, of one's body. The efforts that you make to be professional, to be productive, to be good.</p> <p>[Check with overlaps with authenticity]</p>  | 12 | 25 |
| <p><b>Self-organising</b><br/> This refers to margin of manoeuver, to what extent people organise their work and feel free to manage their task as they want to.</p> <p>At Serv it also refers to the collective freedom of organising, how the team frees itself from the hierarchy (central services), and also to Gilles' way of managing, not wanting to impose his authority but letting people decide for themselves.</p>  | 22 | 98 |
| <p><b>Sharing</b><br/> This node refers to telling others about oneself, being what has just happened, being related to work or to personal life. So it seems it is often the sharing of emotions, even though information is also passed through.</p>   | 21 | 65 |
| <p><b>Slacking</b><br/> Created very late for Serv because of a new person who does not seem to care so much about the work.</p>   | 6  | 8  |
| <p><b>Smoking</b><br/> Refers to observations or mentions of smoking at work. How much is it a social activity?</p>  | 5  | 5  |

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| <p><b>Social status-Informal hierarchy</b><br/>This refers to observations of hierarchy and or social status, being official social status (titles, subordination links) or unofficial, like this one is famous because he is so good.</p> <p>It also includes management practices and manager-subordinate relationship. But after having coded two third about (Comms fieldnotes) I decide to re-work on this category that is too broad (more than 70 references at this point) and I differentiate with the manager official role, so the manager-subordinate relationship, leaving this category for more informal hierarchy, or at least not direct managerial relationship. Of course there are overlaps sometimes, as the respect and admiration are sometimes given to one's manager as her expertise is acknowledged (indeed social status seems to be often associated at Comms with expertise, smartness). So here it is not sheer authority.</p> <p>It seems that people who are in the lower class are nicer. They are a sure thing. The higher you are in the hierarchy, including the uninformal hierarchy, the more power you have to behave as you want and not be nice to people. But at Comms Managers are often very nice, they don't exploit this possibility they have.</p> <p>At Serv this relates also to finding one's place into the network of partners who contribute to a case. This is then related to the identity work that the entity is doing collectively, with the manager being very active in it. Then it is also related to the subgroups in Serv' team: the secretaries, the social workers, the psychologist.</p> <p>[check if I haven't coded in this sense for "standing out", also re-code for "team boundaries" at Serv]</p> | 27 | 172 |
| <p><b>Special client team</b><br/>The few observations related to the special client team in the shared open office with Consulting.</p>   | 6  | 11  |
| <p><b>Standing out</b><br/>Distinguishing oneself from the others (in a good sense obviously). Related to 'looking good'. Also refers to competition with each others. Sébastien uses his personal life a lot to stand out, to get the floor back, to be the center of attention. In a way he embodies this tendency in the culture to look good, different, cool, to be great, but also the pressure to look good all the time as well. As if his life depended on it.</p> <p>At Serv this category will apply to the team mainly, how different they are from other teams (being partners of different functions or being similar teams on different geographic areas). This is then related to finding one's place (better place would be very implicit, but at least different place). It is also related to resisting authority, provoking the established order, i.e. the institution.</p> <p>At Serv it is about making up for a deficit of recognition whereas at Comms it is more about distinguishing oneself from others, looking different (in a good way).</p> <p>It is distinguished from 'looking good' in the sense that it is more direct, more consciously driven (then more verbalised), and also it is relatively to other (people or groups).</p>   | 27 | 77  |
| <p><b>Stressful</b><br/>Refers to the strain provided by the job, whether while working or outside of job hours.</p>   | 19 | 54  |
| <p><b>Tactless-Uneasiness</b><br/>When people don't connect very well. They don't like each other, or the communication dysfunctions. Something is not right and not pleasant.</p> <p>It seems that in Consulting in particular people are not so good with people. Is there an opposition between being so smart and being good with people? Is it the consulting curse?</p> <p>At Serv it also happen that people are shy or don't dare to relate to people in a certain way. That would still enter this category even if it is also very close to 'considerate' in this sense, but still it is not easy and doesn't feel very good.</p>  | 22 | 88  |

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| <p><b>Taking care of people</b><br/>When people seem to be concerned about other's wellbeing, acknowledging other's needs and difficulty in a benevolent sense.</p> <p>At Serv this category might encompass both coworkers and users of the social service.</p> <p>Maybe this is also a case of extra-role behavior? OCB.</p>   | 16 | 66 |
| <p><b>Team boundaries</b><br/>Things that show there is us and them, especially to enhance one's team and criticize others. So in the end mainly negative. The positive side will be in "team spirit".</p> <p>It seems that this node often happens to criticize other or to describe conflicts with others.</p>   | 22 | 69 |
| <p><b>Team spirit</b><br/>A bit the opposit of 'individualism', when people take into account others, when they play collective.</p> <p>It is also responsibility to others.</p> <p>And also opposite to 'evaluating' sometimes. At Serv people don't judge each other within the team, they are very benevolent to other's work, or other's behaviors (like people who never join for lunch for example).</p> <p>So it is largely positive, also when somebody brings food/drinks for the team.</p>   | 28 | 98 |
| <p><b>Teasing-complicity</b><br/>This is certainly a sub-category into 'humor' and/or 'conviviality-friendliness' but as it is a very frequent way to interact at Serv (and quite particular) I felt like creating a category for it. Maybe it only pertains to the manager.</p>   | 16 | 70 |
| <p><b>The Judge</b><br/>Category created for Serv as the Judge seems to be an overwhelming character in their job.</p>   | 17 | 54 |
| <p><b>Time scale</b><br/>This node codes for references of how time scale is considered: planning in the short/long run, the delays for the tasks to be conducted, the urgency, etc.</p>   | 29 | 94 |
| <p><b>tu' or 'vous'</b><br/>The use of 'tu' and 'vous' is quite particular at Serv: in side the team some people say 'tu' to each others and other say 'vous'.</p> <p>But the 'vous' is not a mark of social status necessarily or in a weird way because for example Alexia says 'vous' to Gilles but she also speaks very badly to him. Then the 'vous' is more an old fashioned way to adress to people, it is very plain.</p>  | 13 | 18 |
| <p><b>Un-connection</b><br/>When people are in physical present to each other but don't connect with each other.</p> <p>Or when people try to exchange with people but the other obviously doesn't do what is expected. It might happen also when people don't like the other person (but have to pretend).</p> <p>Or when people are rude or tactless. Overall it accounts for all failed or dysfunctional connections.</p> <p>[re-work between 'Tactless-Uneasiness', 'Un-connection' and 'Conflict-disagreement'=&gt; Here appear a typology of difficult relations, not getting along with people, it didn't appear on the interviews<br/>Possibly un-connection for when people don't connect but don't feel bad about it, as opposed to tastless-uneasiness when people try but don't succeed, and conflict-disagreement when they know they disagree or don't get along well]</p> | 19 | 57 |
| <p><b>User (SS)</b><br/>When users of social services are present, being physically or in the talking. Then it is quite overwhelming category.</p>   | 13 | 98 |

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| <p><b>Validity</b><br/>Arguments for the relevance of the methodology.</p>  | 28 | 137 |
| <p><b>Work hegemony</b><br/>At Comms:<br/>This refers to observation of work being all there is, not letting space at all for personal life, personal constraints, doing as if workers were only workers. The case of no holidays for example.<br/><br/>It overlaps with 'busy-productive' in the case of lunches for example, when people are both having lunch and working hard at the same time.<br/><br/>It may be linked to 'working hours' as well, as when people do extensive hours, including weekends, it shows how important work is and how committed they are to it.<br/><br/>Also when people want to appear very busy, so much that they can't leave their desks for 5 mn, which seems then exaggerated.<br/><br/>There is necessarily an underlying question of work-life boundaries there.<br/><br/>At Serv: the reflection of the impact of work on life domains is very present, however with the acknowledgment that they struggle to limit it. At Serv it this category also includes the boundary that they place on purpose to limit work (like taking time off is not put into question).</p> | 23 | 86  |
| <p><b>Working hours</b><br/>All that refers to the hours they work, being at work or outside of work.</p>   | 24 | 84  |
| <p><b>Written</b><br/>To underline a culture of papers, of writing down, leaving traces, instead of more oral. So it seems it is only at Serv, probably an effect of bureaucracy.</p>   | 23 | 58  |
| <p><b>Youth</b><br/>To refer to how young (or unexperienced) people are overall at Comms.<br/><br/>I create this node only on the 25th of July 2016, but I really could not find a node that would correspond. Then I need to recode for this when I find it in all the rest.</p>   | 3  | 7   |