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Learning cross-functionality and the power of identity:

A case study of an Italian automotive organization

by

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A thesis submitted for the degree of

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Abbreviations

CF   Cross-functional

CFT   Cross-functional team

CoP   Community of practice

FMEA   Failure mode and effects analysis

KM   Knowledge management

ManCo   Management committee

NPD   New product development

OEM   Original equipment manufactured

PLM   Product lifecycle management

SLT   Situated learning theory

Acknowledgements

Your word is a lamp for my feet,

a light on my path.

(Ps. 119, 105)

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Declaration

This is to declare that I have personally written this thesis and that I am responsible for the research work submitted in this thesis. This work has not previously been published in any other form or submitted to any university for any degree or qualification. The thesis is submitted in line with the University of Warwick guidelines for the submission of a Doctoral Thesis.

Abstract

This thesis discusses the relationship between identity and learning in cross-functional teams (CFTs). It focuses on how aspects of membersø identity affect the process of developing cross-functional (CF) teamwork and examines how emerging identity issues can account for different outcomes in the learning of CF teamwork. More specifically, the research focuses on what these emerging identity issues entail in terms of underlying and action-orienting meanings, and on how this can favour or hinder the learning of CF teamwork. This study argues that the collective process of learning how to operate as a CFT is influenced by relational, social and contextual issues. Theoretically, the thesis offers a number of contributions. A critique of current approaches to CF teamwork is provided, where a review of the relevant literature reveals a largely functionalist stance, with a main focus on researching the factors contributing to the effectiveness of CFTs. The thesis advocates an alternative interpretative stance to investigating the role of identity in learning cross-functionality, offering the possibility of an interpretation which is situated in the specific context and which is open to the understanding of emerging, possibly revealing issues. Furthermore, this thesis argues that, within this interpretative approach, by studying what favours or hinders the learning of CF teamwork, it may be possible to deepen our understanding of CFT dynamics. The learning of CF teaming has also been identified as one of the gaps in the relevant literature. The situated learning theory (SLT) and community of practice approach (Lave and Wenger, 1991) is thus adopted as an appropriate theoretical framework for researching the learning of CF teamwork, which is understood here as a practice. SLT suggests that individual learning should be thought of as emergent, involving opportunities to participate in the practices of the community as well as the development of a social identity which provides a sense of belonging and commitment (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Theoretically and empirically justified, the new insight and main focus of this research consists of the consideration of events occurring not only within a CFT, but also beyond and before it, which are able to shape the identities involved, at different levels. This is beneficial, since it explains the different ways of engaging with the practice of cross-functionality and consequently the different learning outcomes. Within the situated learning literature there is surprisingly little explicit reference to theories of identity construction (Handley et al., 2006). A conceptualization of identity is thus derived by tapping into theories of identity which have not yet been developed in SLT, but which represent a useful theoretical development in this arena of studies. These gaps and issues were addressed by conducting qualitative research in a medium-sized Italian firm manufacturing car parts. In particular, an ethnographic study was carried out, using complementary methods such as direct observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary data. Investigations concerned two skilled workersø CFTs devoted to developing the product ranges respectively of joints and pumps, and a managersø CFT whose task was to design a new pump for a particular client. Three identities emerged as especially significant for the meanings they entailed and for the influence they proved to have on learning this practice: the sense of identity derived from relationships characterized by paternalism with significant others at work (i.e. the leaders), and the sense of identity derived from being a worker from Brescia, the specific geographical location of the study, and from being a worker or a manager, understood in terms of occupation and social class.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis discusses the relationship between identity and learning in cross-functional teams (CFTs). I focus in particular on how aspects of membersø identity affect the process of developing cross-functional (CF) teamwork and examine how emerging identity issues can account for different outcomes in the learning of CF teamwork. More specifically, the research focuses on what these emerging identity issues entail in terms of underlying and action-orienting meanings, and how this can favour or hinder the learning of CF teamwork. I argue that the collective process of learning how to operate as a CFT is influenced by relational, social and contextual issues.

The thesis addresses a notable gap in the current Organization Studies literature, which is silent on how contextual factors and the identity of team members enter and condition the process of learning that is entailed in becoming a CFT. In fact, very little research has been conducted into how social and contextual issues influence membersø identity and how relational issues are reflected in the learning outcomes. My research also acknowledges that relational, social and contextual issues informing identity are better captured and explained by an interpretative approach.

1.2 Theoretical and empirical contribution

The original contributions of this piece of work are both theoretical and empirical. The first original contribution is theoretical. Initially, the research offers a critique of current approaches to CF teamwork, where a review of the relevant literature reveals a largely

functionalist stance, with a main focus on researching the factors contributing to the effectiveness of CFTs. Although the valuable contribution of this approach is acknowledged, it also has limitations. First of all, it is decontextualised in that it fails to take into consideration the role played by the social, economic, geographical and historical situated context, which can indeed affect the meaning people attach to relationships, to work and how they learn it. Besides, this functionalist CFT literature adopts a pre-defined analytical framework that impedes, for example, the emergence of issues not included in the propositions to be tested and which if considered when they came to the surface would broaden the understanding of CF teaming. This functionalist predefined approach is also unable to deal with unexpected or puzzling issues. A further limitation is that the perspective is managerial, i.e. it only considers the point of view of management as a neutral technique (Townley, 2001; Parker, 2002), so things are not investigated from the subjective viewpoint of working team members, denying access to many potentially interesting explanations. Having outlined the most evident limitations of the approach taken by the existing CFT literature, I advocate an alternative interpretative stance to investigating the role of identity in learning cross-functionality that offers the possibility of an interpretation which is situated in the specific context and which is open to the understanding of emerging, possibly revealing issues. Such an approach is important because it offers further opportunities to deal with the recognized complexity of CF teaming.

A further theoretical contribution made by the thesis is that within this interpretative approach, I argue that by studying what favours or hinders the learning of CF teamwork, we may be able to deepen our understanding of CFT dynamics. The learning of CF teaming has also been identified as one of the gaps in the relevant literature. Since

the CFT literature recognises that the creation and distribution of knowledge—and especially of tacit knowledge through face-to-face meetings—is one of the essential features of CFTs, the situated learning theory (SLT) and community of practice (CoP) approach (Lave and Wenger, 1991) appears to provide an appropriate theoretical framework for researching the learning of CF teamwork, which is understood here as a practice. SLT also offers useful insights, arguing that the cognitivist focus on abstract knowledge is reductive because it overlooks the largely tacit and social dimension of learning workplace (and other) practice. Instead, the suggestion is that individual learning should be thought of as emergent, involving opportunities to participate in the practices of the community as well as the development of a social identity which provides a sense of belonging and commitment (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Hence, in SLT the CoP is positioned as the context in which an individual develops the practices (including values, norms and relationships) and identities appropriate to that community. However, an analysis of (individual) situated learning and knowledge transfer (across communities) requires not only a conceptualization of communities of practice, but also an understanding of what happens within and beyond such communities (Handley et al., 2006). It is here that this theory might benefit from new insights and this forms the main focus of my research, which is also empirically justified, since identity was one of the issues emerging from the fieldwork.

The new insight consists of the consideration of events occurring not only within a CFT, but also beyond and before it, which are able to shape the identities involved, at different levels. This, I argue, is beneficial, since it explains the different ways of engaging with the practice of cross-functionality and consequently the different learning outcomes.

SLT considers identity almost exclusively according to its developmental aspect, namely in saying that identity ̵develops̶ through participation in work practices. But I suggest that what can also be decisive is how these identities have been shaped by the broader context in which the CFT operates. As Handley et al. (2006) point out, within the situated learning literature there is surprisingly little explicit reference to theories of identity construction. This is why I have deemed it appropriate to adopt a more developed theory of identity, in order to address the lacuna in SLT and to make sense of the data. I have thus derived a conceptualization of identity by tapping into theories of identity which have not been developed in SLT up to this point, but which, as I hope to show in this thesis, are consistent with it and are therefore in my view a useful theoretical development in this area of studies. For example, one of the emerging identity issues that was significant in the empirical setting concerned the relationship between team members and their leader. It became apparent that this specific issue could be better understood by mobilizing concepts from psychodynamic theorizations of identity considering, for example, how the leaders represented significant others to the team members.

In summary, another key theoretical contribution developed here concerns the fact that the literature to date lacks consideration of how identity, other than functional identity (i.e. the identity derived from working in a certain organizational unit) can affect CF teamwork in general and the learning of this practice in particular. Practice is understood here as a system of activities in which knowing is not separable from doing and where learning is a social and not merely a cognitive activity (Gherardi, 1998). In this context, practice is always social (Wenger, 1998:47) and is about õdoing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we doö (ibid).

Thus, learning is õa pervasive embodied activity involving the acquisition, maintenance, and transformation of knowledge through processes of social interactionö (Contu and Willmott, 2003: 285).

From an empirical point of view, this studyøs contribution is significant in that it investigates an organizational structure, the CFT, increasingly adopted by a variety of organizations worldwide in order to enhance productivity and innovation. Besides, at a strategic level, organisations are concerned to position themselves in the knowledge economy and to turn their employeesø knowhow into a managed asset. However, organisational learning is still largely portrayed as an issue for experts in information management systems and reduced to knowledge management (KM) concerns, while employers struggle to address the human issues associated with knowledge creation and exchange (e.g. Kettley and Hirsh, 2000). The interpretative focus of my research on the role played by the relational, social and contextual issues associated with identity in CF teamwork constitutes a steer from decontextualised KM contributions and offers substantial considerations of and new insights into those human issues that could help employers to deal better with knowledge creation/sharing activities.

Finally, notwithstanding the widespread use of CFTs as instruments for increasing knowledge sharing and integration, there is conflicting evidence from past research as to the effectiveness of this organizational structure. I argue that a different approach to such issues, perhaps not a functionalist one, would provide better explanations not only of the contradiction in research outcomes, but also of the very effectiveness or ineffectiveness of CFTs. Indeed, the present study attempts to demonstrate that an interpretative approach can answer the question of why there is conflicting evidence about CFT effectiveness and can help to explain the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of

CFTs, by using analytical lenses more able to render the complexity of human action, also in connection with identity issues.

1.3 Research questions

As explained in chapter 4, through an iterative interplay between concepts, conjectures and data (Van Maanen et al., 2007), I have refined and finally formulated my research questions. In particular, the thesis addresses one main research question and three sub-questions:

- How does identity affect the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork?
  - How does the learning of the practice of CF teamwork vary in the different CFTs studied?
  - What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied?
  - How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated?

These questions were addressed by conducting qualitative research in a medium-sized Italian firm manufacturing car parts, referred to in this thesis as CarparCo. In particular, an ethnographic study was carried out over 18 months, using complementary methods such as direct observation, semi-structured interviews and documentary data. My investigations concerned two skilled workersø CFTs devoted to developing the product ranges respectively of joints and pumps, and a managersøCFT whose task was to design a new pump for a particular CarparCo client, referred to as Auto. By analysing the data produced during this fieldwork, one can identify the way in which identity influenced the possibility for these employees to learn the practice of cross-functional teamwork. In

particular, from the interaction between the findings and my interpretation of them, three identities emerged as especially significant: the sense of identity derived from relationships with significant others at work (i.e. the leaders), the sense of identity derived from being a worker from Brescia, the specific geographical location of the study, and from being a worker or a manager, understood in terms of occupation and social class.

With regard to the first identity, identification and interaction with CarparCo¢s owners as significant others (those persons who are of sufficient importance in an individual¢s life to affect his or her emotions, behaviour and sense of self, including relations such as family members and close friends or mentors) (Ritzer, 2007) in a paternalistic relationship, proved important in shaping skilled workers¢ and managers¢ identities, through an emotional and relational situated embedded context, thus making the learning of the practice in question more or less easy. This means, more specifically, that the context, which importantly in this case was paternalistic, both benevolent and authoritarian, can affect learning through specific identity issues. These issues included the acquisition of technical and social knowledge through social interaction with these significant others; exposure to certain underlying meanings of work; and the role played by the introjected leader as parental figure in eliciting fantasies, nostalgia and fears which were able to act as positive or negative drives towards the learning of CF teaming.

With regard to the second and third identity, two aspects were found to be able to influence the ability to learn CF teamwork: being a worker from Brescia in the North of Italy and being a worker or a manager, understood as occupational groups and social classes. Specifically, something that emerged as particularly important was the meaning

of work that is attached to the local/regional identity of being a worker from Brescia, entailing a strong sense of commitment which had implications for the learning of the CFT practice and for team outcomes (i.e. performance). As to the identity connected with occupation and social class, I found that de-centring, an attitude that I identified as important in learning CF teaming, was very much favoured by being a worker, as a subordinate who cannot afford to lose his job, and hindered by being a manager, as somebody who tends towards self-centring rather than de-centring because of the meaning attributed by these managers to their role and the specific social context in which these meanings are situated.

Discussion of these findings points to a number of theoretical and empirical implications. As to SLT, it is shown that identity is relational and situated, and that what matters is not only how learning shapes or constructs identity but also how this relationship is reciprocal; in other words, how identity also shapes learning. Through a discussion of the work of various authors, the findings prove meaningful to paternalism and identity construction at work. The study highlights how the formation of professional identity is influenced by working in a strongly paternalistic organization. Reflecting upon findings and on existing literature concerning (CF) team identification leads me to assert that membership of a team is an emotionally significant aspect of identity also in connection with a paternalistic relationship experienced by team members. Besides, it is shown how the motivational force supplied by this emotional significance can lead to readiness to engage in or disengage from interaction, to identify with or disidentify from the CFT. Such readiness is dependent on this paternalistic relationship being polarized more towards benevolence or authoritarianism.

Another area where significant implications are found is in relation to paternalism, emotions and learning, showing that learning is also driven by emotions and indicating how emotions deriving from fantasies and memories linked to a paternalistic leader can affect individualsø ability to learn in general and to learn cross-functional teamwork in particular. An interesting implication concerns de-centring; it is shown how the learning of CF teaming also comes from de-centring. Based on my ethnography, I develop a model which theorizes that in learning CF teaming it is paramount to activate three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and pragmatic.

1.4 CarparCo

Before embarking on more analytical work, it seems appropriate to provide some background information concerning the firm where the fieldwork took place, the tasks in which the CFTs studied were engaged and the people involved.

CarparCo is a firm manufacturing car parts, founded in 1962 by Mario Rossi.[1] It began as a small machine workshop in a town in Brescia, in northwest Italy. In chapter 7, we will see the relevance, emerging from the fieldwork, of the role played by this regional context in affecting the identity of participants, especially the workers. This area is one of the richest most and productive in Italy and Europe, characterised by successful family businesses with humble beginnings. Whilst Mario was the leader of this nascent enterprise, his three brothers, Arturo, Fabio and Tulio, made contributions to different aspects of the company. Over time, other relatives, including Marioøs three children, Severino, Federico and Pacifico, became involved in the firm.

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[1] Like ÷CarparCoø and ÷Autoø, all personal names used throughout this thesis, other than that of the researcher, are pseudonyms, in order to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

Chapter 6 in particular will consider the evidence emerging from the fieldwork of the role played by the owners and their leadership styles in affecting both workersø and managersø identities so as to make the learning of the cross-functional teamwork practice more or less easy for those involved.

CarparCo grew steadily, with the owners playing a central role in the firm. Then, in 2005, Mario, its founder and charismatic leader, died of a heart attack whilst undergoing chemotherapy. Again, chapter 6 discusses the influence of Marioøs death on workers and managers, and the emotional contours of his aftermath. With Marioøs death and given the significant growth undergone by the company, Marioøs children felt it necessary in 2007 to begin a process of professionalization, which can be defined as the transition, in the management of a firm, from founders or owning families to professional managers (Schein, 1983). In order to do this, they sought professional advice from a leading Italian university. Over an 18-month period, after conducting semi-structured interviews with all key informants, the university consultants had to prepare and begin to implement a process of reorganization of the companyøs functional structure, which had hitherto always been very simple and flat, with one man, Mario Rossi, essentially in command of the whole organization. It is noteworthy that one of these consultants was then appointed as HR and Organization manager of CarparCo; this was my gatekeeper for the present study, who continued to look after the transformation process that he had initiated as an adviser.

Notwithstanding the cultural resistance to change and to managerial practices manifested by many CarparCo employees, primary and contributory responsibilities were defined and targets were set, through the implementation of management by objectives. In this way, managers and middle managers started working in pursuit of

specific objectives, which represented a real novelty for the company. At the time of the fieldwork, CarparCo was therefore undergoing a generational transition, entailing a massive change in mindset, due in part to the fact that the company was trying to move from owners' to managerial control in order to sustain its new size. We will discuss, in chapter 6, some of the consequences of this transition, particularly in relation to managers and the difficulties arising from having been accustomed to one-man management. Furthermore, in common with many other companies, CarparCo was faced with the presence in the market of low-cost competitors, responding by continuing to pursue product quality as its strategy.

At the time of the fieldwork, CarparCo was a medium-sized company, characterised by economic and financial solidity, with an annual turnover of 113 million euros, 500 employees, three manufacturing plants for the production of car components and four production lines: brake drums and disks, hydraulics, joints and water pumps. Its main strategic focus was on aftermarket manufacturing (85%), with 5% of capacity dedicated to original equipment supplied and 10% to original equipment manufactured (OEM). CarparCo sold its products in 90 countries all over the world. Significantly, the company maintained very good connections with the local area in terms of employing relationships, suppliers, local authorities and social networking. It was also notable in its compliance with high quality standards, having obtained the most important certification in the automotive sector, ISO/TS 16949.

Regarding workforce demographics, roughly two-thirds were workers, of whom 33% were employed in machining, 20% in assembly and 15% in packaging. Most of the workforce (62%) was male. As to qualifications, only 5% were graduates, whilst 55% were not educated beyond the compulsory level of secondary education. Furthermore,

the workforce was relatively young, half being aged between 30 and 45 years. Finally, looking at length of employment, 60% of the workforce had been working for CarparCo for no more than 10 years in 2007.

1.5 The joints and pumps CFTs and range development

As far as aftermarket strategy is concerned, CarparCo had been striving for an ongoing product range development which aimed to ensure the satisfaction of an increasingly large number of customers through a broadening of its product catalogue. The development of this range of products was the specific task of the two cross-functional teams that are the focus of the present work: the joints and pumps CFTs. Basically, these had to develop (i.e. design and manufacture) the new joints and the new pumps that the marketing unit decided, with the board's approval, to add to the CarparCo catalogue. Both teams were cross-functional in that each was composed of one representative from the programming office (the team leader), one from the technical office, one from the manufacturing office, one from the quality office and one from the buying office. The two CFTs were initially promoted by the HR and Organization manager, in his earlier capacity as consultant, for two reasons: on one hand, to favour cross-functionality, since functions had tended to work in isolation, with activities being carried out sequentially; on the other hand, to overcome a lack of coordination between the technical office and manufacturing. In other words, a good number of drawings were made but then very few items were actually realized and added to stock, due to the paucity of connections between functions. Thus, the objectives of these two CFTs were to increase the effectiveness of the range development process and to reduce time to market. Both objectives were outstandingly achieved: the work backlog was eliminated and monthly targets were steadily achieved or exceeded. Thereafter, the goals of the two

skilled workersø CFTs were to handle criticalities concerning the industrialization of new products, to favour collaboration and competence integration, and to stimulate responsibility, decision-making and the ability to work in a group.

With regard to these two CFTs, which became permanent organizational structures, it is possible to identify macro- and micro-stages in their operation. Let us consider them in turn. At the first macro-stage, the board would define guidelines for development of the range. At the second stage, the marketing function, based on cost and investment assessments, turned these guidelines into objectives. At the third stage, Marketing and Operations would agree on an operative range development plan. Operations then sent a report each month with the annual target for the range development. At the fourth stage, after each monthly meeting the two CFTs would update this report and submit it to Operations. On approval from Operations, this document was then sent to Marketing. Thus, each team referred to Operations regarding process and to Marketing as to objectives. The process indicator of CFT performance consisted of monitoring the activity of the teams through a consideration of any discrepancy between what was programmedô three joints or three pumps per monthô and what was actually accomplished.

As to the micro-stages followed by the joints and pumps CFTs, they can be considered from a general and from a particular point of view, each including a number of activities comprising the practice of working cross-functionally. In general, it should be noted that the work practice of the two CFTs required knowledge-sharing activities, where members shared relevant knowledge, and cooperation activities, which involved negotiating and following a defined common work method and working jointly. Team members had to engage and jointly participate in knowledge-creation activities, since

they were required to identify and apply solutions which took into account the contribution of each function, giving priority to team process objectives and considering functional objectives as secondary. In particular, the micro-stages of the two CFTs can be summarized as follows.

At the first stage, the team would engage in knowledge-sharing and analysis activities, where they analysed the item to be realised. These activities in turn served decision-making activities, since the team had to establish whether any component of an item already developed at CarparCo could be adapted for use in its manufacture. Always striving for the functionality and performance of the item to be produced, the teams engaged in knowledge-creation activities, since their task was not to copy the new item mechanically. It would be pointless and costly to start each new project from scratch, especially considering that the product range already included more than 500 items. Therefore, the team would undertake knowledge-sharing, analysis and decision-making activities, discussing whether a certain component of a joint or of a pump could be adapted and how, or whether it should be manufactured from scratch or bought in from a supplier. Where a component was to be adapted or manufactured from scratch, the team had to engage in analysis and knowledge-sharing/creation activities, considering whether the available equipment was adequate for working that specific component or whether it would need to be adapted or modified with new parts. Where a component was to be bought in, the team would again engage in comparison and decision-making activities to examine estimates, considering the quality-price ratio. In these discussions, team members would need to pool their functional know-how.

At the second micro-stage, when working on prototypes, they would undertake knowledge-sharing/creation/circulation and problem-solving activities, discussing

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possible problems related to materials, equipment, the actual manufacturing process, or components ordered from a supplier which had not yet been delivered. At the third micro-stage, the team would undertake control and decision-making activities, checking that difficulties had been ironed out and agreeing on the initiation of mass production. It is also important to point out that this process was predominantly emergent, since they were not following specific guidelines on how to work and were given no training, but came up with the process by themselves. At the beginning of their establishment, the two CFTs would meet very often to develop the practice which, through social interaction, was worked and re-worked. In the analytical chapters, I discuss evidence of some of these activities which help to show that the teams had learnt to work cross-functionally. I also discuss the process of work and re-work of the practice through relationships, which also entailed smoothing communication styles and negotiating on methodological views. Table 1.1 lists members of the joints and pumps teams and their functional roles.

Table 1.1: Roles of workers' CFT members

	Joints team	**Pumps team**
Programming Office	Antonino Corti (team leader)	Emanuele Pesci (team leader)
Technical Office	Pierino Buffetti	Guido Luraghi
Manufacturing Office	Ottavio Rubini (joints foreman)	Leonardo Brembilla (pumps foreman) plus newcomer Vincenzo Boni
Quality Office	Giacomo Precisi, plus newcomer Danilo Conti	Leopoldo Savelli
Buying Office	Bernardo Limoni, replaced by Mattia Gradoli after retiring	Elio Torri

1.6 The Auto team and the pump project

One of the few OEM projects on which CarparCo embarked was to develop a new pump for Auto (a car company belonging to one of the most important groups in the

automotive industry worldwide). This was the first time that CarparCo and Auto had collaborated. For the first 18 months after its establishment, the Auto team, composed of managers from different functions, rarely convened, focussing almost exclusively on R&D activities (i.e. designing and testing). In the analysis chapters, we shall see why this was the case and what it meant in terms of lack of activities such as cooperation, communication and knowledge sharing and therefore in terms of poor learning of cross-functionality. After this long time, the team started to meet more often, particularly to engage in failure mode and effects analysis (FMEA), an inductive process widely used in product development, systems engineering, reliability engineering and operations management in the manufacturing industries for the analysis of failure modes within a system, classified according to severity and the likelihood of failure (Langfort, 1995). These FMEA activities were introduced because Auto, the car company ordering the pump, required them, to ensure a procedural form of design review to eliminate weakness from the design and from the process, and to have clear documentation of the possible failure modes. A successful FMEA activity helps a team to identify potential failure modes based on past experience with similar products or processes, or on the logic of common failure mechanisms, enabling the team to design such failures out of the system with the minimum of effort and resource expenditure, thereby reducing development time and costs.

During these meetings, the Auto team would therefore discuss the current state of the project and the results of tests carried out on prototypes. FMEA represented for the team an analytical approach to reviewing potential failure modes and their associated causes. It helped the Auto team to assess which risks gave the greatest cause for concern and which therefore should be addressed in order to prevent problems before they arose. The

development of these specifications was intended to ensure that the product would meet the requirements set by Auto. In particular, the Auto team engaged in two specific kinds of FMEA: process FMEA, involving the analysis of manufacturing and assembly processes, and design FMEA, where the analysis of the product was conducted prior to production. It should be noted that these meetings were not very regular, taking place roughly every seven to ten days. The managers involved, definable as the main actors, are listed in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Auto team - main actors

Team leader	Osvaldo Romagnoli
Head of R&D	Rinaldo Gatti
Head of Buying Office	Tiziano Acquistapace
Head of Quality Office	Alvise Ronchi
Head of Manufacturing and Plant Director	Teresio Maestri

As illustrated in chapter 5, it emerged from the observation of meetings and from interviews that activities essential to the CFT practice, such as knowledge sharing, cooperation and decision making, were still insufficient even after the introduction of FMEA activities, indicating how poorly this practice had been learnt. In chapter 6, I provide an explanation that can account for such a state of affairs by exploring the role played by certain issues emerging from the fieldwork. These concern the identity that managers constructed through their relationships with Mario Rossi and his paternalistic style of leadership, kept alive to some extent by his heirs, whose management style showed a certain resemblance to his. In chapter 7, we will continue to explore the emerging issues that might account for this poor learning, this time concerning the role played by the identity derived from being a manager, understood in occupational terms.

Table 1.3 lists other somewhat more marginal players, who intervened only in particular instances when important briefings were held or important decisions had to be taken.

Table 1.3: Auto team - marginal actors

Controller	Ivo Numerini
Head of Home Sales	Ignazio Bianchi
Head of Business and Development, shareholder and member of the board	Severino Rossi

The project ended when the team presented a prototype to Auto, who rejected it as being too expensive and too complicated to realize. The automotive group to which Auto belonged therefore resorted to one of its usual providers, who managed to design a pump which was much cheaper and whose realization was easier than that of the CarparCo design.

1.7 Overview of thesis structure

This thesis is organized into eight chapters. Chapter 2 introduces the topic of cross-functional teams, asking what they are and identifying the main issues around them. Gaps in the existing literature are identified, such as on the learning of CF teamwork itself. Having stated that the creation and distribution of knowledge and especially of tacit knowledge through face-to-face meetings is one of the essential features of CFTs, I argue that the situated learning theory and community of practice approach is an appropriate choice to theoretically frame issues concerning the learning of CFT practice. As explained later, through an iterative interplay between concepts, conjectures and data (Van Maanen et al., 2007), it became very clear that identity was one of the emerging issues worthy of further investigation. In this interplay between theoretical and empirical planes (Van Maanen, 2007), I also realized that although SLT explores the influence of learning on identity, it fails to consider how the identity that has developed

not only within but also beyond and before a particular CoP is able to affect the learning of a new work practice. Hence, this became the broad focus of my research.

Next, chapter 3 looks more closely at identity, considering why it is important in CF teamwork. It also asks why it is important in learning, by drawing on SLT to provide theoretical support for the link between identity and learning. However, given that SLT does not offer a sufficiently developed theory of identity, I propose a conceptualization of identity which is consistent with the broad tenets of SLT and which also helps to make sense of the data produced. Identity was thus an issue that emerged as important in my data and fed my thinking, inviting me to engage with a theoretical elaboration of identity in developing my thesis. It was not, in other words, something that I had set out to test by employing a specific theoretical model. My elaboration of identity includes the mobilization of some concepts from psychodynamics, which again I find both appropriate and necessary to make sense of the data.

Chapter 4 examines the methodological considerations underlying this study. It encompasses a discussion of philosophical and sociological assumptions, of ethnography as method and the related techniques, and of reflexivity, including in relation to the fact that I am a blind researcher. The chapter ends with an explanation of how data analysis was carried out and how credibility and dependability were ensured.

Subsequently, chapters 5, 6 and 7 develop the main empirical findings proposing the key analytical strategies followed here. Chapter 5 begins the analysis of the data in order to answer the first research question. Drawing on interview and observational data, the chapter examines the extent to which the skilled workers belonging to the joints and pumps teams and the managers belonging to the Auto team had learnt CF

teamwork practice. Chapter 6 seeks to explain the empirically established difference in learning outcomes between skilled workers and managers. It shows, through a number of narratives, how interaction with CarparCo's owners had affected the identity of each group so as to influence their ability to learn cross-functional teamwork. Chapter 7, again based on fieldwork data, shows that a closely related emerging issue able to influence the learning of the CF teamwork practice was that of skilled workers' local and regional identity. The analysis thus considers what it means to be a worker from the North of Italy in terms of identification with one's job and what can be inferred from this in connection with the learning of the CFT work practice. It then examines a third aspect of identity, this time concerning occupation and in particular being a worker, with regard to members of the joints and pumps teams, and being a manager, with regard to Auto team members.

Chapter 8 discusses these empirical findings and assesses the extent to which the overall research question and the three sub-questions have been answered. The discussion of the empirical findings is also carried out in light of the literature discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. This chapter draws together the key conclusions and contributions of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Cross-functional teams in the literature

2.1 Introduction

Cross-functional teams have gained an important place in competitive organizations as a means of accomplishing tasks from new product development (NPD) to strategic planning, as well as being a major component of many quality improvement programmes (Misterek, 1995). This chapter introduces the CFT and its relationship with learning. It is structured as follows. First, I discuss what CFTs are, their structure, their aims and why they are important (section 2.2). Drawing on the existing literature, I identify the most important issues affecting cross-functional teams and how they have been studied (section 2.3). I discuss the prevalent functionalist orientation of the existing CFT literature and argue that an alternative, interpretative approach to studying the learning of CF teaming, so far unexplored, could provide deeper insights and a valuable explanation of the complexities of CFT dynamics. Having stated in section 2.2 that the creation and distribution of knowledge and especially of tacit knowledge is one of the essential features of CFTs, I continue the chapter by illustrating the situated learning theory and community of practice approach, explaining how and why it can theoretically frame issues concerning the learning of CFT practice. I also identify gaps in SLT that theoretically justify the formulation of the broad research question and a first sub-question (section 2.4). I draw to a conclusion the arguments developed throughout the chapter by recapitulating gaps in this area of study (section 2.5).

2.2 CFTs: What they are and why they are important

Under the fierce competition of the current networked economy, many organizations are searching for ways and means to improve their sustainability, effectiveness and innovation status through the structuring and restructuring of their workforces. As a result, embedding collaborative strategies in their business process is perceived as almost essential (Mohamed et al., 2004). The use by organizations of work teams and in particular of CFTs has recently increased significantly at a global level (Blindenback, 2009). This section considers what a CFT is and attempts to identify the benefits connected to its implementation, which, in most cases, make it an important device for increased organizational performance and efficiency (Blindenback, 2009).

2.2.1 The specificity of cross-functional teams: Definition and application

As teams have become more prevalent in the workplace, they have also become more varied in terms of their purpose, structure and function. One example of a variation in team structure is the cross-functional team, a concept formulated by practitioners in work organizations (Trent, 1993) that is also known as an interfunctional team (Parker, 1994) or an integrated product team (Trent, 1993). According to Denison et al. (1996), CFTs can be described as a means of connecting various functional õchimneysö of an organization which, if not linked, send output skyward without the influence of relevant information from other divisions. Under these conditions, characteristic of a typical hierarchical structure lacking in integration, it becomes almost impossible to make decisions, resolve conflicts across functional areas and coordinate the simultaneous development of several different products (Bishop, 1999). In other words, whilst in traditional hierarchical organizations each functional area works in isolation on its own part of the process and then passes the activity to the next department in a serial

decision-making process, a cross-functional team brings together an array of specialists who jointly and simultaneously make design and manufacturing decisions (Bishop, 1999). Through this concurrent, informed and consensual way of making decisions, together with action-producing processes, it is possible to speed up the overall cycle time by reducing sequential knowledge transfer activities, to reduce the likelihood of rework, redundancy and inappropriate activities, to favour improvement in the flow of communication and increased knowledge at lower levels of the organization, as well as to reduce the delays in knowledge transfer incurred when sequential activities are performed by different people or groups (Henke et al., 1993).

The key assumption is that the consequent increase in the availability of knowledge improves future decision making, even down to a daily operating level. This helps to align operating-level decisions better with corporate strategy and objectives (Hauptman and Hirgi, 1999). Additionally, by using cross-functional teams, decision making is decentralized through the use of lateral decision processes, which can cut across the traditional vertical lines of functional authority, speeding the making of decisions and increasing the chances of õbuy-inö and cooperation by all affected departments (Bishop, 1999).

Denison et al. (1996) outline three characteristics that distinguish CFTs from conventional teams in organizations: the distinct functional responsibility of each member; the temporary, project-driven nature of the team; and the unique performance criteria of knowledge creation and dissemination. A CFT can be defined as a group comprised of individuals from separate functional areas and different hierarchical levels (managers, workers, experts, facilitators) convened with a specific purpose for a defined period of time (Clark et al., 2002; Mohamed et al., 2004). However, this definition

needs to be integrated with other important features that make cross-functional teamwork different from the operation of more conventional teams, as highlighted by Kettley and Hirsh (2000). These features are: competing identities, integration in the organisational structure and performance expectation. Cross-functional teams, in fact, may also be differently integrated into the organisation's structure and business processes, whether in place as a semi-permanent structure, or organised as a parallel and largely separate project (Kettley and Hirsh, 2000).

From the literature considered so far, one sees that cross-functional teams have been increasingly used by organizations to address broad-scale organizational problems. Bringing a cross-functional perspective to organizational problems appears to help in building understanding, problem-solving capabilities, coordination, communication and ultimately improved quality and productivity (Proehl, 1996). Most of the current CFT literature focuses on issues of effectiveness, considering the facilitating and hindering factors. In the next section I will provide an overview of this literature to identify these issues and show how they have so far been addressed by researchers. This will help me to take the first steps towards recognizing where the gaps are and where my research therefore stands.

2.3 Key issues in CF teaming: What has been researched and how?

As illustrated in this chapter and the next, the existing CFT literature can be described as being primarily focused on identifying the key issues around CFTs and on determining the factors that contribute to or impede their effectiveness (Proehl, 1996). Contributors to this literature have pursued these research goals by adopting predominantly quantitative methods, with the use of a deductive approach to theory building, where hypotheses were derived by selecting specific variables as likely causes

of some designated effect, then tested against hypothesis-driven data via statistical analyses (Gioia and Pitre, 1990; Schultz and Hatch, 1996). These considerations, together with the discussion below, reveal a prevalent functionalist paradigm, which, usually carrying an implicit orientation toward a managerial perspective, seeks to examine regularities and relationships that lead to generalizations and ideally to universal principles (Gioia and Pitre, 1990). In this section, I aim to examine the key issues evidenced by the CFT literature, taking stock of its findings but also demonstrating its functionalist orientation and the related limitations. I will also propose an alternative, interpretative approach, showing how those limitations can be addressed and what additional benefits this approach carries.

I want to emphasize that I am far from advocating the dismissal of traditional positivist theory building and deductive approaches. Indeed, the permeability of boundaries between paradigms is here assumed (Schultz and Harch, 1996). Such approaches are clearly relevant when issues are defined according to their basic assumptions. However, using different theory-building approaches to study disparate issues favours a more comprehensive portrayal of complex organizational phenomena (Gioia and Pitre, 1990). Given the multifaceted nature of organizational reality, including CF teaming, consideration of theories from alternative paradigms is needed (Hassard, 1988).

As observed by several authors (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Lincoln, 1985; Rorty, 1987), organizational studies have been characterised by a relative dominance of functionalism, which is one of the sociological paradigms assumed in researching organizational phenomena. In this paradigm, there is the assumption, derived from positivist and natural scientific approaches to research, that the nature of organizations

is a basically objective one that is õout thereö, awaiting impartial exploration and discovery (Gioia and Pitre, 1990).

Within the CFT literature, a stream of research has investigated the relationship between success and the characteristics of cross-functional teams, as opposed simply to their use (Bowen et al., 1994; Hershock et al., 1994; Hitt et al., 1996; McDonough et al., 1986; McDonough et al., 1993; Pinto et al., 1993; Thamain, 1990). McDonough (2000) points out that although several relatively distinct areas of focus can be identified within this literature, there have been few attempts to organize it in a way that helps to understand the interrelationships among those factors found to affect success (Denison et al., 1996). I wish to draw attention to the main focus of these studies on exploring causal relationships between variables in a decontextualised manner, which typically pertains to the functionalist approach, commonly described as normative (Scherer, 1998). Although I appreciate the value of the wide-angle view of functionalist positions, I also advocate the need for a more profound investigation of these matters, where the comprehension of causes and effects is contextualised in the history and culture of the organization and of individuals, through an interpretative lens, which takes into account, using conceptualizations from situated learning theory presented below, the situatedness and embeddedness of organizational phenomena, to highlight potentially unexplored issues which play an important role in CFT dynamics. This is possible because interpretive studies are largely founded on divergent analytical processes, whose proponents claim that they expand and enrich the analysis by constantly seeking more interpretations and making new associations. Divergence occurs as one association provokes others in a series of interpretive acts (Knights and Willmott, 1995). Thus, the divergence within functionalism is based on arguments of generalization, whereas

divergence within interpretivism relies on the emergence of associative relations (Schultz and Hatch, 1996).

According to McDonough (2000), the research that has been conducted can be grouped into three major areas of focus: stage-setting elements, enablers and team behaviours. The group of studies concerning stage-setting elements has focused on variables that play an antecedent role in the product development process, including setting project goals (Boven et al., 1994; Lawler, 1992; Pelled & Adler, 1994; Pinto et al., 1993; Thamhain, 1990), empowering project team members (Boven et al., 1994; Donnellon, 1994; Frischer, 1993; Hershock, 1994; Lawler, 1992; McDonough et al., 1984; McDonough, 1991; Pinto et al., 1993; Thamhain, 1990; Wellins, 1991), establishing a project climate (McDonough et al., 1993; Thamhain, 1990) and the human (as opposed to physical or financial) resources of the team (Boven et al., 1994; Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1987; McDonough, 1993; Zirger and Madique, 1990). These antecedent elements are described as reflecting management actions that initially direct the development effort and set the stage for the product development that follows. They are put in place at the outset of a project and create the foundation on which the work of the project takes place (McDonough, 2000). Although I acknowledge the important role played by stage-setting elements, it should also be noted that they appear to be seen here as shaping the activities of organization members in a fairly deterministic way (stage-setting elements = foundation for CFT work), which again shows the functionalist perspective assumed by this research (Gioia and Pitre, 1990). An interpretative approach would problematize the impact of these stage-setting elements by looking at how the specific context where they are put in place mediates their enactment and their influence on team membersø activity. This would allow a better understanding of the

effect of stage-setting elements on organizational and team membersø activities, also leading to improved explanation and treatment of problematic/unexpected instances.

The group of studies concerning enablers has focused on the key role played by managers and leaders during the process of developing a new product by assisting the team in overcoming problems and providing support (McDonough, 2000). These individuals can facilitate the development teamøs efforts and impact on the stage-setting elements that have been put into place initially. Researchers have found that these individuals play different roles, including leading the cross-functional team (Barczak and Wilemon, 1989; Elmes and Wilemon, 1988; McDonough et al., 1986), providing support (Donnellon, 1993; Hitt et al., 1996; Thamhain, 1990; Zirger and Madique, 1990) and championing the project (Markham and Griffin, 1998). As to team leaders, the research that has been done indicates that they do not need to take direct action to precipitate project success. Rather, they operate indirectly as enablers of the NPD process. This enabling function can take several forms. For example, McDonough and Leifer (1986) found that effective project leaders delineated task boundaries for the team and then allowed team members to perform within those boundaries without specifying how the work itself was to take place. In this way, they enabled the development process, i.e. the work of the team, rather than engaging directly in carrying out development tasks themselves. Another means of enabling is for team leaders to engage in a participatory style of leadership, where team members are given the freedom to explore, discuss and challenge ideas and make their own decisions about what technologies to pursue, what problems to solve and what tasks to undertake. When this style is employed, the team leader gives considerable control to the team to conduct product development as it sees fit (McDonough et al., 1991). In this way, the team

leader is an õenablerö by virtue of ceding responsibility to team members for making decisions, i.e. empowering them, rather than taking that responsibility for himself or herself. A leader may also enable NPD by performing a variety of roles, including keeping team members challenged, instilling a positive attitude toward the project and being a communicator (Barczak and Wilemon, 1989).

Senior management support of a project team can have a direct effect on performance (Hitt et al., 1996; Thamhain, 1990; Zirger and Madique, 1990). Their support can take a variety of forms, including demonstrating commitment, helping the team to surmount obstacles, making things happen and providing encouragement to the team (Bowen et al., 1994; Hershock et al., 1994; Hitt et al., 1996; Thamhain, 1990; Zirger and Madique, 1990). Champions, who have been defined as people who take a special interest in seeing that a particular process or product is fully developed and marketed (Rosenau et al., 1996), can play an enabling function. Their role can vary significantly, from little more than stimulating awareness of an opportunity to playing a major role in overcoming strongly entrenched resistance by management.

From the review of the literature on enablers, it is clear that all three types of leadersô team leaders, senior managers and championsô have complex roles to play. Although a few studies suggest that leaders can have a direct impact on project performance, the preponderance of research suggests even more strongly that they play an indirect role, moderating the effects of stage-setting elements and in so doing impacting indirectly on cross-functional team success (McDonough, 2000). Taking stock of what this literature has said about CF teaming, its functionalist orientation should nevertheless be noted, being denoted by the use of terms such as õmoderating effectö, õdirect effectö and õfactorsö, taken from quantitative and natural scientific disciplines (Scherer, 1998).

Besides, it is important to point out that it is the very complexity of the connections between stage-setting elements and enablers, highlighted by this functionalist literature itself, that calls for a more problematized reading, arguably leading to an improved understanding of cross-functionality. For instance, it is useful to have identified the link between the support of managers (i.e. enablers) and the empowerment of project team members (i.e. stage-setting elements). However, there may be cases where a true understanding of a CFT performance entails understanding why; in other words, what is the situated, embedded context that can explain why, say, team members are not empowered or are not able to be empowered. Hence, I am questioning the limitation of an approach that is decontextualised, which does not take into account what is relevant to informants (subjective realities) within a local and specific context, considering time, place, situation, participants and agenda.

A further area of research has investigated the relationship between stage setters and enablers on one hand and team behaviours, including cooperation, commitment, ownership and mutual respect, on the other (Bowen et al., 1994; Pinto et al., 1993; Thamain, 1994). Although stage-setting elements do not impact directly on performance, both stage setters and enablers can influence team behaviours in important ways (Pinto et al., 1994). I shall now consider the research that has investigated these factors and their relationships.

Cross-functional cooperation is conceptualized as the degree, extent and nature of interpersonal relationships among project team members from multiple functional areas, while the need for cross-functional cooperation stems from the complex interdependencies among members of functional groups working together on project teams (Pinto et al., 1993). A variety of factors have been found to act as facilitators or

inhibitors of cross-functional cooperation among team members. These range from individual factors such as the personalities of group members, interpersonal relations and training and skills (Johnson, 1975; Kelly and Stahelski, 1970; Pavett and Lau, 1983; Schmidt and Tannenbaum, 1960) to organizational factors such as strategy, structure, reward systems and cultural norms (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967; Mintzberg, 1979; Moch and Seashore, 1981; Shapiro, 1977).

The second team behaviour considered in this literature, commitment, is described as a sense of duty that the team feels towards achieving the project's goals and the willingness to do what is needed to make the project successful (Boven et al., 1994). Thus, by properly setting the stage, i.e. by staffing the project with the right mix of people and through effective project leadership, the organization can generate greater commitment on the part of the team to achieving the goals of the project, which can lead to high performance outcomes (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993). Two issues should be considered here. The first is the prescriptive nature of this research, where universal principles (setting the stage = commitment = performance) are adopted and applied in a generalized manner without taking account of context. The second is the largely managerial perspective, where the aims and findings of this research are unproblematically orientated towards performance and efficiency, without seeing things from team members' perspectives.

Ownership, the third element of team behaviour, is defined as the feeling of wanting to make a difference. It goes beyond duty and commitment, in that members of the team begin to tie their identities to the project's outcome, leading them to make extra effort to ensure its success. Several stage-setting elements have been found to affect project ownership, including empowering the team, establishing a climate and setting goals. Of

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these three elements, setting clear, focused project goals early in a project seems to be most likely to foster ownership (Boven et al., 1994). It has also been found that the actions of a team leader, such as using a participative leadership style, can facilitate or hinder the development of a sense of ownership on the part of the team by fostering greater involvement in translating goals (McDonough, 2000).

The fourth behavioural element is respect. The respect that team members have for each other can lead to open communication among the team and to feelings of trust (Wellins et al., 1991). When team members trust each other¢s judgment and interact honestly with each other, they are, in effect, exhibiting a form of respect for others (Wellins et al., 1991). While clear, this discussion of team behaviours also appears somewhat simplified. A closer investigation of the relationship between stage setters and team behaviours, for instance, would reveal the deep-rooted influences of these relationships on team members, for example in practical terms. If, for instance, after accurately choosing players (i.e. human resources), and after improving organizational strategies and reward systems, cooperation (i.e. team behaviour) is still problematic, it becomes paramount to grasp the less manifest reasons for phenomena such as lack of cooperation, so as to provide an understanding that can help team members achieve good performance. These less manifest reasons may concern the very human and context-sensitive issues which are better addressed by an interpretative approach, which is interested in discovering the underlying meanings believed to order human experience (Schultz and Hatch, 1996).

Although the studies presented so far are formulated at different levels of analysis (organizational/structural; individual/behavioural; group/interpersonal), they all depend upon causal arguments (i.e. the relationship between stage setters and enablers on one

hand and team behaviours on the other) (Schultz and Hatch, 1996), which again amounts to a functionalist perspective, and arguably misses the benefits of a more problematizing reading. Functionalist analyses operate primarily in a causal mode, whereas interpretive analyses are more often developed in an associative mode (Scherer, 1998). As in the case of the literature considered here, the analysis is conducted by filling in predefined variables and mapping the causal relations between them. In contrast to the causal mode of functionalist analysis, interpretive analysis is associative. This means that interpretivists explore the active creation of meaning and the ways in which meanings are associated in organizations (Gioia and Pitre, 1990). This mode of analysis draws out particular themes, images and metaphors (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Spradley, 1979) which can lead to a more profound and shaded understanding, say, of why ownership is lacking despite stage-setting elements and enablers being put in place as suggested by this literature, or why commitment is found to go well beyond its observed relationship with stage-setting elements and enablers. It may also be that the meaning of work constructed by team members is able to explain a certain sense of commitment.

In conclusion, as suggested throughout this section, the perspective clearly assumed in these studies can be described as functionalist. In other words, the approach taken by the existing CFT literature is fairly normative, in that causal relationships between variables/factors are tested, and prescriptive, in that universal principles are adopted and applied in a generalized manner. Apparently, these universal, neutral principles can be controlled and predicted. However, given the complexity of organizational phenomena in general and of CFT in particular, I argue that an alternative, interpretative approach can produce markedly different and uniquely informative theoretical views of the events

under study (Hassard, 1988). The way this literature addresses CFT is decontextualised and arguably lacks the theoretical depth necessary to deal with unexpected and puzzling cases, not contemplated in the predefined hypotheses and variables which could, however, be influential in working cross-functionally. It would greatly improve our understanding of CFT to address also instances of the kind that escape neat systematisation. This is possible through an interpretative approach whose analytical framework follows an emergent specific development, in which the constructs most useful to describing CF teaming are suggested by the analysis (Schultz and Hatch, 1996). Although the contributions discussed here emphasize different dimensions or variables of cross-functional teamwork, they all advocate using a predefined and universal analytical framework that can be generalized to all particular organizations studied (Schultz and Hatch, 1996). By contrast, the interpretive emergent perspective that I intend to take in this study is largely inductive; through this process, as detailed in chapter 4, I have attempted to account for phenomena with as few a priori ideas as possible, being sensitive to what the emerging data suggested and what theoretical abstractions were then useful in making sense of these emerging data, following a more iterative and interactive process between data and theory (Van Maanen et al, 2007).

2.3.1 Potential barriers to CFTs

Finally, a group of studies has investigated the potential barriers that CFTs may encounter. Hitt et al. (1999), in a longitudinal quali-quantitative case study of one CFT, identified two primary potential barriers to team effectiveness: the independent frames of reference of the team members and organizational politics. As to the first barrier, it should be noted that individuals within a distinct specialization (functional area) often have common educational backgrounds and similar work experience. The types of

problem they face and the criteria used to evaluate and resolve them are also often similar. The authors argue that these individuals have similar cognitive biases, use similar heuristics and are likely to have developed common work-related tacit knowledge while exercising their specific functions (Hitt et al., 1999). Thus, members of new product design/development CFTs who come from different functions may have different frames of reference (Dougherty, 1990; Hitt et al., 1993; Kolodny, 1979). As a consequence, for example, design engineers on the team may emphasize the importance of technical criteria in the new product design, whereas marketing members may emphasize design criteria that more effectively meet customer needs and will be attractive in the marketplace. While these differences represent a desired characteristic of a CFT, they can also make it difficult to achieve agreement on the appropriate design criteria (Hitt et al., 1993). Especially with regard to this one barrier, I shall illustrate, in the analysis chapters, how an interpretative stance is able not only to acknowledge the presence of problems derived from differences in frames of references, but also to account for the somewhat unexpected instance of their solution.

The literature also considers a second potential barrier to the effectiveness of cross-functional teams, which is organizational politics. Ancona and Caldwell (1992) found that functionally diverse teams were more visible throughout the organization, making them open to the political and goal conflicts that may exist among different units. These teams, then, can become forums to play out conflicts between such units, and team performance can suffer. Although politics can occur in any type of work team, research indicates that the very structure of matrix teams can invite political behaviour. In other words, members not only report to two bosses, but they also represent unique functional units and professional constituencies, which often compete with the interests and goals

of other units and constituencies represented by other team members (Hitt et al., 1999). In this regard, individual goals may even compete with those of the matrix team itself (Watt et al., 2001). Political behaviour affects team effectiveness by reducing cohesion (Mullen & Cooper, 1994) and cooperation among members (Pinto et al., 1993). Other cross-functionality constraints may be caused by the organizational structure; for example, in vertically structured organizations, cross-functional resistance is typically connected to the unwillingness of middle managers to share their power.

2.3.2 Some contradictory evidence

Considering the range of issues discussed above either favouring or constraining the use of CFTs, it is perhaps unsurprising that the literature presents mixed evidence as to their effectiveness. In other words, research indicates that managersø increased reliance on cross-functional teams has not always resulted in the outcomes that such teams were designed to produce, such as innovativeness and efficiency (Lovelace et al., 2001). However, work challenges continue to increase and with them the perceived need for cross-functional teams (Griffin and Hauser, 1996). The literature considers a variety of effectiveness criteria for CFTs. Interestingly, while some contributors argue that the success of any project may require that all criteria be met (Athanasaw, 2003), others contend that what makes one effective and another a failure may not be well understood (Hitt et al., 1996; Kiely, 1994), as suggested by the conflicting results of research that has examined the relationship between performance and the use of cross-functional teams (Adler, 1995; Carmel, 1995; Clark & Wheelwright, 1992; Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1993; Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1994; Dougherty, 1995; Ford & McLaughlin, 1992; Griffin, 1997; Gupta & Wilemon, 1990; Henke, 1993; Millson et

al., 1992; Page, 1993; Rosenthal, 1992; Souder, 1987; Takeuchi & Nonaka, 1986; Zangwill, 1993; Zirger & Madique, 1990).

One stream of research on cross-functional teams, again drawing on the functionalist paradigm, has examined the relationship between their use and that of various measures of performance (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992; Griffin, 1997; McDonough et al., 1997; Zirger and Hartley, 1996). This research has yielded inconsistent results. Ancona and Caldwell (1992: 338), for example, found that the functional diversity of CFTs was negatively related to performance. They concluded that õsimply changing the structure of teams (i.e. combining representatives of diverse function and tenure) will not improve performanceö. Other researchers found that the functional diversity of teams might help to speed up product development (Zirger and Hartley, 1996), particularly in the early stages of product development (Griffin, 1997), but might not contribute to innovativeness and team performance. Still other research suggests that an innovation strategy may moderate the relationship between cross-functional team use and performance at the corporate level (McDonough et al., 1997).

Webber (2002) asserts that the full performance potential of CFTs is not always realized. The paradox of CFTs is that their unique characteristics lead to increased success, yet these same characteristics also lead to difficulty in realizing the efficiency and effectiveness gains over individuals (Northcraft et al., 1995). Cohen and Bailey (1997) summarize the evidential conflict regarding the benefits of functional diversity by stating that there is mixed evidence as to whether heterogeneity amongst team members facilitates or hinders effective performance. Thus, some studies have found that the involvement of multiple functions in new product development has a positive effect on performance (Dougherty, 1992; McDonough et al., 1997; McDonough, 2000;

Souder, 1987), whereas others have discerned a less clear-cut relationship between the use of cross-functional teams and performance, whereby these groups often do not yield the anticipated performance gains (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Clark & Wheelwright, 1992).

These conflicting results, McDonough (2000) argues, may stem from the organizational context within which cross-functional teams operate, including the size of the firm and the industry, or they may stem from the internal infrastructure of the firm using cross-functional teams. Cross-functional teams may simply work in particular circumstances and contexts but not in others. Alternatively, they may work well in a variety of contexts, but a firmøs particular internal infrastructure may cause them to fail. McDonough (2000) is thus right to point out that achieving cross-functional team success appears to be more complicated than previously thought. It is legitimate to ask what is suggested by these contradictory research findings and gaps in the research carried out so far. Another valid question is why the literature seems to find it so difficult to come to terms with this conflicting evidence. Certainly, it can be argued that the understanding of CFTs is far from complete. It could also be argued that a different approach to such issues, perhaps not a functionalist one, would add deeper explanations not only of the contradiction in research outcomes, but also of the very effectiveness or ineffectiveness of CFTs. Indeed, the present study attempts to demonstrate that an interpretative approach can answer these questions, by using analytical lenses more able to render the complexity of human action. McDonoughøs (2000) invitation to consider context is therefore appropriate, although not from a functionalist perspective, which would mean considering relatively neutral elements of context such as those mentioned above (e.g. infrastructure); rather, it is appropriate to consider the situated embedded

context, including its social, historical and geographical aspects, in which CF teaming is enacted. Adopting this interpretative approach would also mean asking what meanings are constructed in this specific context and how these meanings can interact with CF teaming, possibly explaining the conflicting evidence discussed above.

Furthermore, in order to achieve an even more profound understanding of CFT dynamics, I seek, through this interpretative emergent approach, to identify issues which positively or negatively influence the learning of cross-functional teamwork. By looking at the situated context where the learning of CF teaming has taken place, I hope to identify emergent issues revealing underlying meanings able to favour or hinder this very learning. I argue that by investigating the learning of CF teaming, in other words what might affect it, asking myself why it has been learnt so well or so badly, deeper rooted and unexplored issues can be discovered which can add to the understanding of CF teaming provided by considering the factors referred to above (stage-setting elements, enablers, team behaviours and barriers). It should be noted that it may not be enough to simply become aware, for example, that knowledge sharing is inadequate; it may also be necessary to understand more deeply why team members are not pooling their know-how and have not learnt to do so, or why they are not working and have not learnt to work collaboratively. My intention, in other words, is to take an approach to the CFT which is more context sensitive, situated and embedded, rather than decontextualised and neutral to actual historical realization, as Lave and Wenger (1991) would put it. I will make an attempt to de-codify and re-codify some key points that may be useful to others in the understanding of CFTs. Here, then, is the first focus of my study: the very learning of cross-functional teamwork.

We can now start to identify a thread to follow through this study. First, this section has shown that research has raised a remarkable number of issues related to CFTs and that these have all been examined from the perspective of effectiveness. As noted above, the stance taken in investigating these issues has been functionalist and the research largely quantitative. While the issues examined are numerous, they do not include a consideration of what can favour or hinder the very learning of cross-functional teamwork, allowing deeper insights into CFT dynamics through an interpretative and qualitative approach of the matter. Therefore, if learning cross-functionality is the focus of my research, I need to identify the best approach to learning in relation to cross-functional teamwork, which is what the next section deals with.

2.4 What learning theory for CFTs?

The definition of a CFT provided in the first section identified as one of its key characteristics the existence of strong links between CFTs and knowledge circulation/creation. Many investigators, such as Benson and Dresdow (1998), Barker et al. (1998), Calabrese (1999) and Fernandes and Raja (2002), point out that knowledge sharing within CFT structures is vitally important; in other words, cross-functionality cannot be effective without the sharing of knowledge among team members. In many organizations, cross-functionality plays a significant role in binding units together and provides a superlative medium for competence gains and productivity enhancement. Mohamed et al. (2004) further argue that for these teams to be successful, members must benefit from participatory behaviour and cross-functional knowledge sharing, where all those who are involved in a project pool their knowledge and skills to contribute to decisions across organizational boundaries, so as to generate better results in a shorter period of time. The combination of collegial relations, personal competence,

multiple skills, tacit knowledge, diversity and technology are supposed to assist in leveraging the collective brainpower of the organization (Mohamed et al., 2004). It would appear that CFTs, with collaborative and cooperative activities, provide an additional level of communication for knowledge sharing. If an idea is withheld from circulation, it remains largely ineffective, whereas if it is shared with many CFT members then it multiplies, because not only will each member hold the idea, but many may also develop creative insight into it. In addition, these insights are likely to differ, as each receiver has his/her own mental model and will add a different tacit dimension. It is argued that the most powerful rationale behind the need for cross-functionality is the transfer of tacit knowledge, because it is difficult to codify (McDonough, 2000). Moreover, many researchers have suggested that face-to-face meetings are the key driver for knowledge transfer and the crystallization of new ideas, and the best method for the manifestation of alternative opinions (Swan et al., 1999; Bennett and Gabriel, 1999; Hankinson, 1997).

Exactly because in order for CFTs to be successful, team members must benefit from participatory behaviour in face-to-face meetings and because the main rationale of CFTs is the transfer of tacit knowledge, I argue that the conceptualisation that best fits cross-functional teaming and that can offer the most useful insights into what favours or hinders the learning of this specific kind of teamwork is the situated learning theory and community of practice approach (Lave and Wenger, 1991). SLT places itself within the practice-based approach, where practice is a system of activities in which knowing is not separable from doing and where learning is a social and not merely a cognitive activity (Gherardi, 1998). I therefore argue, together with several other authors, that the nature of learning is social and relational, and that this view is better suited to

explaining and interpreting the learning of cross-functional teaming. In the following subsections I will show why this is the case and will provide details of this specific approach to learning.

2.4.1 Towards a social view of learning

The growing centrality of knowledge extends well beyond the limited domain of õknowledge-intensiveö organizations. All types of organization increasingly depend on their capacity to effectively mobilize and manage knowledge in order to fulfil their missions and thrive (Nelson and Winter, 1982; Drucker, 1993). One consequence of this emerging õknowledge-centredö discourse has been a burgeoning interest, at all levels, in the issues of organizational learning and of knowledge creation and management. For example, a study conducted by two Canadian scholars in 1996 found that between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the number of articles on organizational learning in academic journals and business magazines grew exponentially, almost doubling year by year (Crossant and Guatto, 1996). This striking trend slowed at the end of the 1990s, to be replaced by expanding interest in the topic of õknowledge managementö (Scarborough et al., 1999).

It appears from surveys of the literature on organizational learning and knowledge management over the years (Fiol and Lyles, 1985; Nicolini and Meznar, 1995; Easterby-Smith, 1997; Dierkes et al., 2001) that the majority of the scholarly and practitioner-oriented contributions on these topics have used conceptual repertoires that take notions and constructs previously developed in the fields of biology, psychology, economics, cybernetics or education and apply them to management and organizational studies. A first group of authors uses approaches that conceive of knowledge as the codification of experience in some form of cognitive structure or behavioural pattern,

and of learning as the process through which such structures and patterns change (Kim, 1993; Fiol and Lyles, 1985). Accordingly, organizations are equated with entities that process information, reflect on experience and in this way acquire knowledge. To the extent that they modify their internal systems of belief and their actual or potential behavioural repertoires, these organizations are said to have õlearned.ö This understanding of knowing and learning constitutes a somewhat critical transfer of a set of concepts from the field of individual psychology, where they have been linked to human development and cognitive capabilities, to organizational and management studies (Nicolini et al., 2003). In order to extend to social organizations and firms the categories and concepts used to explain human cognition, learning and behaviour, however, these authors must perform one of two equally undesirable operations: either they must still conceive knowing as something that resides in the heads of individuals, then use the artifice of õlevelsö in order to explain organizational phenomena (Kim, 1993), or they must anthropomorphize organizations and conceive of them as super-individual entities in order to effectuate the transfer to them of individual human characteristics.

A second group of authors conceptualises knowledge as an immaterial and atemporal substance: knowledge can thus be taken out of context, recorded, classified and distributed. Davenport and colleagues, for example, define organizational knowledge as a form of õhigh value-added informationö (Davenport et al., 1998: 43), while Nonaka et al. (1996: 295) describe it as õa set of significant information which constitutes true and justified belief and/or implies a technical competenceö.

Finally, yet another group of scholars adopts an economic and finance-oriented approach. From this perspective, knowledge is an õinvisibleö asset and a form of

õintellectual capitalö which can be quantified, estimated, accumulated and exchanged as a high-valued commodity. For these authors, therefore, it is possible to establish measures of a firmøs intellectual and knowledge capital, to ascertain its market value and its contribution to the profitability of the firm, and to put appropriate techniques in place to monitor and manage it (Stewart, 1994; Bontis, 1997; Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998). As in the previous case, knowledge is reduced to something very akin to information, which can consequently be stored, retrieved and processed by modern communication technologies (Nicolini et al., 2003).

The main shortcoming of all three approaches is that they tend to translate uncritically into the organizational terrain conceptions of knowledge that have prevailed for centuries in Western cultures, but which philosophers and social scientists of the last two generations have subjected to scrutiny and severe criticism. The conceptualisation of knowledge as an object rather than a processô that is, as a mental substance mainly located in individual minds and manifested in written texts, representations and routinized behavioursô is needlessly restrictive (Nicolini et al., 2003). Most of the debate in management and organizational studies ignores, for example, the growing attention to the social and processual aspects of knowing and learning that stems from traditions such as phenomenology, pragmatism, symbolic interactionism, Wittgensteinøs thought, deconstructionism and poststructuralism.

Arising from this last stream of traditions is the practice-based approach to learning, which, as anticipated above, is where I theoretically frame the present research in relation to knowing and learning. As further explained in the following subsection, practice is a system of activities in which knowing is not separable from doing and where learning is a social and not merely a cognitive activity (Gherardi, 1998).

2.4.2 Learning as participation in a practice

In recent years, the concepts of practice and activity have attracted the attention of academics and practitioners working on learning and knowledge in organizational and work settings. These scholars and practitioners have all begun to explore the implications for research and intervention of the notion that knowledge and learning are mainly social and cultural phenomena. The result is increasing interest in the thesis that organizational knowledge and learning cannot be conceived of as mental processes residing in membersø heads; rather, they should be viewed as forms of social expertise, that is, as knowledge in action situated in the historical, social and cultural context in which it arises and is embodied in a variety of forms and media (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000). While stemming from different intellectual backgrounds, these views contribute to the area of practice-based theorizing on knowing and learning in organizations. This approach assumes that knowing precedes knowledge, both logically and chronologically, for the latter is always an institutionalised version of the former. Scholars at work in this area investigate the theoretical implications and practical consequences of this depiction of organizational knowing as situated in the system of ongoing practices of action, as relational, mediated by artefacts and always rooted in a context of interaction. Such knowledge is thus acquired through some form of participation and is continually reproduced and negotiated; that is, it is always dynamic and provisional (Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000).

2.4.3 Situated Learning Theory

Within this practice-based framework lies the SLT/CoP approach (Lave and Wenger, 1991), which constitutes the specific theoretical frame of my study in relation to learning. SLT argues that the cognitivist focus on abstract knowledge is misleading in

that it overlooks the largely tacit dimension of workplace (and other) practice. Instead, the suggestion is that individual learning should be thought of as emergent, involving opportunities to participate in the practices of the community as well as the development of an identity which provides a sense of belonging and commitment (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Knowledge is not primarily abstract and symbolic, but provisional, mediated and socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Blackler, 1995). Therefore, the lens of situated learning focuses attention upon õlearning as a pervasive embodied activity involving the acquisition, maintenance, and transformation of knowledge through processes of social interactionö (Contu and Willmott, 2003: 285).

As Mohamed (2004) argues, understanding the social nature of learning is crucial to capitalizing on knowledge so as to improve the quality of products and to excel in services, and this is by and large achievable through cross-functional teams, which can be equated to communities of practice. CF teaming is primarily and specifically a work practice which involves collaboration and meaningful interaction among people from various functions, divisions and entities, resulting in a blend of individual backgrounds, behavioural patterns and awareness. It is true that CFTs revolve around a common endeavour or project, which entails sharing and creating explicit as well as tacit knowledge. However, it is the uniqueness of tacit knowledge that prompts the formation of cross-functional teams and of communities of practice, for its externalization of team members to suspend assumptions and judgment and enter into a free flowing dialogue in which different ideas can be explored together (Mohamed et al., 2004).

The dissemination and creation of knowledge is, indeed, an essential part of the õpracticeö in which CFT and CoP members are involved, while taking part in social

interactions which enable them to learn how to be members of that group (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Brown and Duguid (2001: 203) explain that õby practice we mean, as most theorists of practice mean, undertaking or engaging fully in a task, job or professionö. In this context, practice is always social (Wenger, 1998:47), and is about õdoing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we doö (ibid). Learning is a practice-based process of participation in social interactions where meaning, identity and legitimate behaviours are generated collectively and negotiated among members (Wenger, 1998).

Furthermore, Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) emphasize the need for proximity and ongoing relationships among project participants as they share tacit knowledge through both dialogue and activity. The CFT provides a face-to-face platform for the transfer of tacit knowledge, which is the most desirable method of sharing this kind of knowledge (Mohamed et al., 2004). In this context, the concept of participation in its changing forms, as a means by which identity and practice develop, assumes a central role in explaining the distinct trajectories that learning can take and which may or may not lead to an idealised full participation. Participation, in fact, not only denotes activity where meaning is developed through relationships and shared identities, but also reflects the many and varied ways in which individuals negotiate their engagement with communities of practice (Handley et al., 2006). In CFTs the level of engagement can of course vary, depending on several issues, as shown in section 2.3, but also on many other issues that may not have been considered in the most traditional approach to CFT.

Hence, in SLT the community of practice is positioned as the context in which an individual develops the practices (including values, norms and relationships) and identities appropriate to that community. By participating in a practice, a newcomer

develops an awareness of that community's practice and thus comes to understand and engage with (or adapt and transform) various tools, language items, role-definitions and other explicit artefacts, as well as various implicit relations, tacit conventions and underlying assumptions and values (Brown and Duguid, 2001). For example, individuals develop practices by observing others, imitating them, then adapting and developing their own particular practices in ways which match not only the wider community's norms, but also their own individual sense of integrity and self (Handley et al., 2006; Wenger, 1998).

However, in contrast to theories of socialization (e.g. Vygotsky, 1978) which predict the smooth reproduction of communities over time, situated learning theory also considers the possibilities for variation and even intra-community conflict. Individuals bring to a community a personal history of involvement with workplace, social and familial groups whose norms may complement or conflict with one another. These conflicts need to be negotiated and reconciled—at least in part—if the individual is to achieve a coherent sense of self. The following table recapitulates the identifiable differences and similarities between cross-functional teams and communities of practice.

Table 2.1: Differences and similarities between CFTs and CoPs

CFT	CoP
Differences	
Constituted ad hoc by management	Emerge spontaneously but can be fostered by management
Distinct functional responsibility of each member	Members may or may not be from the same function/area of expertise
Temporary or semi-permanent	Permanent as long as the practice is active
Project driven	Focused on a common endeavour of the practice
Similarities	
Sharing and creation of knowledge, especially tacit	Sharing and creation of knowledge, especially tacit
Knowledge is shared through dialogue and activity in face-to-face meetings	Knowledge dissemination and creation occur through social interactions
Possible conflict due to functional differences	Possible conflict due to personal history of involvement with workplace, social and familial groups

An analysis of (individual) situated learning and knowledge transfer (across communities) thus requires not only a conceptualization of community of practice, but also an understanding of what happens within and beyond such communities (Handley et al., 2006). It is here that this theory might benefit from new insights and it is here that my research focus mainly sits. It is of considerable importance to understand events occurring not only within a CFT, but also beyond and before it, which are able to shape the identities involved, at different levels, so as to explain the different ways of engaging with the practice of cross-functionality and consequently the different learning outcomes. Identity is considered in SLT only in its developmental aspect, connected with participation in work practices. However, what can also be decisive is how these identities have been shaped by the context in which the CFT operatesô both the most immediate organizational context and more broadly the historical and socio-economic ones.

It is important to point out that the argument developed so far justifies theoretically my attempt to explore more deeply the link between identity and learning in SLT, by enquiring how the identity developed beyond and before a certain CoP can affect the learning of the CF teamwork practice. However, it should be noted that alongside this theoretical justification, there is an empirical one. In other words, as indicated in the introduction, what emerged from the fieldwork also directed me to a deeper engagement with the issue of identity and therefore its conceptualization. This also motivates my intention to deepen my analysis of the link between identity and learning, and the influence of the former on the latter.

Following these theoretical and empirical considerations, I am now able to formulate a broad research question addressed in this thesis, which can be phrased as follows: How does identity affect the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork? Besides, having claimed that I intend to explain the different ways of engaging with the practice of cross-functionality and consequently the different learning outcomes, I first need to be aware of the different ways of engaging with this work practice and the ensuing learning outcomes. A first sub-question can thus also be posed: How does the learning of the practice of CF teamwork vary in the different CFTs studied? It should be noted that in order to answer this first sub-question, I will refer partly to some of the issues evidenced by the CFT literature examined above (i.e. stage-setting elements, enablers, team behaviours and barriers), and partly to the system of activities, their acquisition, maintenance or transformation through social interaction, so as to establish whether or not this work practice has been learnt by the CFTs investigated.

Finally, as Handley et al. (2006) point out, within the situated learning literature there is surprisingly little explicit reference to theories of identity construction. I shall examine

identity issues more deeply in the next chapter, also in connection with learning, which will lead to the formulation of another two research sub-questions.

2.5 Chapter summary

At this point it would be useful to retrace the thread of the exposition presented so far, highlighting along the way the emerging gaps that allowed the main research question and a first sub-question to be formulated. Initially, I discussed what CFTs are and why they are considered important, then I examined the CFT literature to identify the key issues involving CFTs and how they have been tackled by earlier researchers. It emerged that several key issues have been addressed predominantly by taking a quantitative, functionalist approach and focusing on CFT effectiveness through a context-neutral analytical framework. I also saw that this largely functionalist CFT literature presents conflicting evidence on the effectiveness of functional diversity. Hence, I claimed that an interpretative approach with its focus on situatedness and embedded context might add depth to the understanding of CFT dynamics. Moreover, I argued that by seeking to identify the emerging issues affecting the learning of cross-functionality in the local context where it took place, I can further this understanding. The learning of cross-functional teaming can therefore be considered a first gap that needs to be addressed, since it remains unexplored by the existing CFT literature. Next, I identified in particular the sharing and creation of tacit knowledge and participatory behaviour in face-to-face meetings as essential features of CFTs. Thus, I proposed a perspective that I claimed to be appropriate to these specific features. This led me to consider a social and processual view of learning, the practice-based approach, and in particular the situated learning theory of Lave and Wenger (1991), which examines the link between learning and identity, positing that learning implies becoming a full

participant, a member, a kind of person. It involves the construction and reconstruction of identity. However, the CoP literature fails to consider how learning a practice in a CoP is also informed by identities, as they have been shaped not only by what is going on within the community at that moment, but also by what went on before and beyond it, and how (and if at all) that impinges on learning, in this case learning cross-functional teaming. Theoretically justified by this second gap in SLT and empirically justified by issues emerging from the fieldwork, I formulated the main research question, while SLT itself inspired the first sub-question.

The next chapter will focus on identity. I will first consider what the existing CFT literature has so far said about identity in relation to cross-functional teams. Next, I will look at why identity is important in learning CF teaming and what is a useful theoretical framework for identity. This will help me in shaping further the final research questions addressed in this thesis.

Chapter 3

Identity

3.1 Introduction

As stated at the end of the previous chapter, this third chapter focuses on identity, which has emerged as a possible key issue in relation to the learning of cross-functional teamwork. The chapter is structured as follows. First, I explore the way identity has been studied in the functionalist literature on CFTs (section 3.2) to see what there is of use to my study. Next, drawing on situated learning theory, adopted in chapter two as a theoretical framework for learning, I further examine the link between identity and learning in order to clarify how they entail one another and in particular how identity is constructed through learning as participation in a practice. This section is designed to develop the appropriateness of my overall research question (How does identity affect the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork?) by considering how SLT postulates the impact of learning on identity in a certain CoP but fails to consider how the identity that has developed not only within but also beyond and before a particular CoP is able to affect the learning of a new work practice such as cross-functional teamwork (section 3.3). Given that SLT, while valuable in explaining the link between learning and identity, lacks a more developed conceptualization of identity, I then present a conceptualization of identity able to help make sense of the data and to make up for this lacuna in SLT (section 3.4). At the end of this section I take a step further in rendering my overall research question more explicit by posing a second and a third sub-question. The chapter ends with a brief summary (section 3.5).

3.2 Why is identity important in CFTs?

Having established that my main interest is in how identity can affect the learning of cross-functional teamwork practice, I need to pursue my exploration of the literature to see what has been written about identity and CFT, how the research was carried out, what the main findings were and how it links with and adds to my own research concerns. It is necessary to clarify from the outset that in these contributions there is a sort of ambiguity in addressing identity and identification, since these terms are never clearly distinguished, but are used interchangeably or recursively, so that they merge or overlap.

It should be noted that identity is one of the most popular topics in contemporary organisation studies, as in many other branches of the social sciences. Identity is addressed on a multitude of levels: organisational, professional, social and individual (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Sometimes these are linked, as when organisational or (other) social identities are seen to fuel the identities of individuals (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Elsbach, 1999; Humphreys and Brown, 2002; Kunda, 1992). The issue of identity is purported to be crucial to our understanding of how individuals relate to the groups and organisations in which they are participants (Brown, 2001). The cross-functional team itself represents, as indicate in chapter 2, an important element of today's organisations and it would be relevant to explore it in relation to identity issues, but this is scantly addressed by the current CFT literature. Only a handful of articles have been found to tackle identity issues in CFTs. Besides, as anticipated in the previous chapter, the perspective adopted by these works is largely functionalist, with the limitations carried by this approach that I am questioning. These contributions are now presented and discussed.

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Randel et al. (2005) conducted a quantitative study of the relationship between functional background identity, dissimilarity and an individual's performance in a cross-functional team. They administered a survey instrument to 262 professionals comprising 37 cross-functional teams in seven organisations; the dataset consisted of 145 responses analysed through hierarchical regression analysis. Industries represented were telecommunications, computer manufacturing, engineering services, aerospace and consulting. This introduction to the research is sufficient to show that it took a functionalist stance, having most of the characteristics discussed in the previous chapter, i.e. a positivist approach to research.

Drawing upon the identity literature, Randel et al. (2005) discuss how it might augment the traditional approach to functional diversity (relational demography, measured by demographic dissimilarity). Their study investigated two types of identity: social identity, which is described as involving caring about the successes and failures of one's group or subgroup, and personal identity, described as resulting from one's own experiences and background. The focus of the study was on the extent to which functional background differences relative to others on a team would affect the strength of the relationship between identity and individual performance (Randel et al., 2005).

It is important to note the nature of the relationship between identity and demographic characteristics assumed here. Social and personal identity types are constructed in reference to demographic characteristics. For example, a demographic characteristic such as functional background comprises the content of an individual's social and personal identities. While identities can be multidimensional in their content (for example, consisting of numerous demographic characteristics such as age, race and gender) as well as in their type (social and personal), in this research the focus was on

the latter. A first consideration concerning this study is that a simplification and a reduction, typical of functionalist research, is made for ease of analysis. Thus, this study set out to consider only functional background identities and dissimilarities, ignoring other emerging identity issues which could affect CFT performance and which would have been revealed by an interpretative approach.

Randel et al. (2005) found that it was when a team member with a strong personal identity was in a team's functional minority that the negative effects of personal identity on performance as a team member become stronger. One explanation for this finding is that members of a functional background minority feel discouraged from engaging in behaviours that will benefit their team, because they are perceived as weak performers regardless of their course of action. Alternatively, the self-serving behaviours of a strong personal identity may be exacerbated for such people, who may withhold cooperative behaviour to serve their self-interests. One of the limitations of these findings is highlighted by the authors themselves, who advise caution in interpreting their results, because the data are cross-sectional, making it uncertain whether identification processes affect an individual's performance; it may be that performance within a team (or within a functional unit more generally) alters the extent of identification with functional background and the importance placed on function (Randel et al., 2005). It is important to have evidence that strong personal identity affects performance negatively if a team member is in a functional minority, since it adds something to the concern for context which is crucial to the interpretative perspective assumed in my study. However, these findings and the explanation provided call for a more contextual understanding that could give ground to the interpretations offered by these authors. One could also ask what other aspects of that situated social

context affect identity so as to make team members work collaboratively, as required in CF teamwork practice. If we really wish to understand the negative impact on performance that personal identity may have, we should enquire as to the meaning these team members with a supposed strong personal identity give to working in a minority functional sub-group. In this way, an associative mode of analysis would start, where, from interpretation to interpretation, we would be able to make sense of this finding, which the authors fail to explain satisfactorily.

The study also provides empirical support for the theoretical assumption that social and personal identities operate differently, because of differences between collective focus and self-focus. In this way, the study extends theory concerning these two facets of identity to the domain of individual performance within a cross-functional team, by showing that social identity is positively related to performance, while personal identity and performance are negatively related. The authors have taken an important step forward by adding a collective focus to the self-focus on identity and its impact on performance in CFTs. This could offer a hint to follow when making sense of data on CF teamwork, since the collective focus invites a broader view of relationships and the web they constitute, which again is in the direction of considering social and relational situatedness. However, it should also be noticed that both the empirical support and the theoretical assumption these authors discuss are too general and context-neutral. What does collective focus mean in that specific socially, historically and economically situated context? How does this specific context allow for a more collective or self-focused construction of identity? Such questions would allow emerging issues to reach the surface of our understanding so as to produce an explanation that takes into

consideration the complexity of phenomena such as the role of identity in affecting CFT performance.

Besides, the research of Randel et al. considers only personal and social identities, which are insufficient to unravel the complexity of the identity construct; the identity developed through dyadic relationships can, for example, also be crucial in shaping one's professional identity and should therefore be included in an investigation of the role of identity in CFT members' individual performance. Overall, it is possible to conclude that the contribution made by this research, while valuable, leaves space for furthering our knowledge of identity in relation to CFT members' performance.

Other research worth mentioning is that of Sethi (2000), which examines, again through a functionalist approach, the role of team-based superordinate identity in influencing new product performance, using a postal survey of 118 key informants in cross-functional teams working on major new product initiatives. The organisations represented in the sample were producers of appliances, lawn care equipment, office supplies, toys, processed food products, health and beauty aids and household products. Data were subjected to regression analysis and slope analysis (Aiken and West, 1991; Jaccard et al., 1990).

The rationale for this study was that given the widespread use of cross-functional teams in new product development, Sethi sought to examine how new product performance can be enhanced by mitigating the adverse effects of functional identities in teams. Regarding the multifunctional nature of product development teams, in fact, a major source of concern is the presence of deep-rooted biases and stereotypes that arise from one functional area and are used negatively to individuate people from other areas

(Griffin and Hauser, 1996; Gupta and Wilemon, 1988). Sethi (2000) refers to Ashforth and Mael (1989), Gregory (1983) and Hutt (1995), arguing that to a large extent, these biases and stereotypes have their roots in strong functional identities which are firmly held by individuals in the organisation. These functional identities and the resulting interfunctional biases and stereotypes make it difficult for members of cross-functional teams to work together constructively, thereby adversely affecting the team's effectiveness in developing successful products (Dougherty, 1990; 1992; Dougherty and Heller, 1994; Griffin and Hauser, 1996). Although, as was asserted with reference to the work of Randel et al. (2005), the exclusive focus on functional identity can be reductive and leave other influential identity issues unexplored, this research suggests that among the identity issues that might hinder the learning of the CFT practice are the strong functional identity of team members and their consequences for the social and organizational context in terms of distrust and closure derived from prejudice. It should also be considered, however, that the failure of representatives of functions to work collaboratively may stem from identity issues well beyond those more closely related to departmental affiliations. This is what the empirical chapters will show.

In order to explore how the detrimental effect of members' functional identities can be minimized, Sethi (2000) turns to social identity research. Studies of social identity have suggested that an effective way of overriding the adverse influence of individuals' previous group identities and enhancing team effectiveness is to create a strong sense of superordinate identity, which, in the context of a cross-functional team, refers to the extent to which members identify with the team and perceive themselves as having a stake in its success (Brewer and Miller, 1984; Mackie and Goethals, 1987).

Broadening the argument and making it more consonant with my concerns, it could be argued that favouring a team-based identity might facilitate the learning of this very practice. Thus, in making sense of the data, one could see whether this superordinate identity is associated with a good learning of the practice, observable in specific team activities. Will it be enough, or should I wonder what other past identifications, together with functional identity, favours or hinders identification with the CFT? In those past identifications, what are the issues involved? There may be other identity issues, such as rooted inhibitions or a cultural inclination to individualism, making it difficult for CFT members to identify with their team; such issues, I am suggesting, deserve proper attention. Although favouring superordinate identity can certainly foster collaboration in CFTs, it should not therefore be accepted uncritically or treated in a deterministic prescriptive manner.

Finally, I shall consider a study by Van der Vegt et al. (2005), who obtained data from multidisciplinary teams working within a Global 1000 (BusinessWeek, 2003) company in the oil and gas industry in the Netherlands. These teams, composed primarily of scientists, engineers and technicians, were responsible for research and development functions. The researchers administered 283 questionnaires and subjected the results to hierarchical multiple regression analyses (Aiken & West, 1991; Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003). The main focus of their research was on the relationship of diversity in expertise with team learning and team performance under varying levels of collective team identification. Briefly, in teams with low collective identification, expertise diversity was found to be negatively related to team learning and performance, whereas when team identification was high, these relationships were positive. The previous chapter made evident that knowledge sharing (i.e. team learning) is one of the main

activities that can show whether or not a group of people has learnt to work as a cross-functional team. This indicates that identification with the CFT favours knowledge-sharing activities, a finding which may be helpful in considering my data.

Of particular interest to my study is the contention of Van der Vegt et al. (2005) that it is necessary to consider the motivational climate within a team in order to identify conditions under which expertise diversity will be leveraged. There are reasons to expect that members of a multidisciplinary or multifunctional team might find it difficult to engage the other members of their team in critical and investigative interactionö (Amason, 1996). Instead, the natural tendency may be to stereotype the other members of oneøs team, to assume that they õjust donøt understandö and to argue and defend rather than seek conciliation and integration (Van der Vegt et al., 2005). Members of a multidisciplinary team need the motivation to transcend these disruptive tendencies before they will exert the effort to do so. The authors argue that this motivational element begins with collective team identification, with a sense that team membership is an emotionally significant aspect of oneøs identity. Collective team identification is therefore described as the emotional significance that members of a given group attach to their membership of that group. This definition acknowledges that social identification is multidimensional, encompassing õknowledge of í membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membershipö (Tajfel, 1978: 63). The emotional component has been shown to most clearly õsupply the motivational forceö leading to action or the õreadiness to engage in or disengage from interactionö (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000: 563).

What is interesting here is the acknowledgement of the role played by the õmotivational climateö, which can be interpreted as the specific context in CFT, a context that can be

characterised by closure and prejudice, as also underlined by the work of Sethi (2000) discussed above. Another important point is that collective team identification can help to rework the context so as to make it more able to leverage diversity of expertise, which then affects team outcomes. This confirms the importance of identity, of identification processes and of furthering their investigation in CFTs. The third important issue underlined here is the recognised emotional significance attached to team membership. This adds to my concerns in that it broadens our focus to include the role and the meaning of emotions in connection with identity within the CFT context, which, translated into an interpretative approach, can lead to valuable contributions, as chapter 6 shows. Besides, if the emotional component has been shown to represent a strong drive to engage or not to engage in interactions (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000), the need becomes evident to understand how and why this emotional drive is characterised and polarised. The emotional space where what these authors are calling emotional drive emerges is something my interpretive study explores, showing its significance and role in learning CF teaming.

The stance assumed in this study is again definable as functionalist. However, if being a CFT member is an emotionally significant part of one's identity and if it is necessary to delve into the emotional world of team members to understand what really motivates them to be fully or partially committed to the team's goals, I consider that more appropriate theoretical and analytical lenses should be adopted. These are represented by the interpretative approach already introduced, which will be furthered by mobilizing a few concepts from psychodynamics later in this chapter. Moreover, this point invites a further change of theoretical and analytical perspective to one which is more capable of capturing the complexity and subtlety of human identity, including its substantial

connections with other identities and with the context. This is one of the reasons why, in this chapter, I will present a conceptualisation of identity which offers appropriate support for studying identity in my research.

In summary, the research so far conducted on the role of identity in CFT can be described as largely functionalist and predominantly focused on functional identity, possibly to the detriment of other identity issues that might emerge from the context. However, the findings of this type of research also invite a consideration of the role of the social context (i.e. collective focus and motivational climate) and highlight the importance of team identification in overcoming disruptive tendencies or, in interpretative terms, a conflictual social context. Finally, this research evidences the emotional significance attached to team membership, broadening our perspective to take account of emotions in connection with identity and learning the CFT practice. In the next step of my theoretical journey, I will further explore the link between identity and learning, thus preparing the ground for the subsequent steps which more closely concern identity.

3.3 Why is identity important in learning?

In the previous chapter, I introduced situated learning theory as a suitable approach to CF teaming. Given the attention to identity issues discussed thus far, it is apt to explore more closely what kind of link exists between identity and learning as framed by SLT. In SLT, the link between identity and learning is in fact well explained, from a stance that takes into consideration the profound relational nature of both identity and learning, and the importance of their interactions.

As already illustrated, organisations in both the private and public sectors are increasingly team based, achieving their ends by means of programmes, projects, taskforces and working groups. At a strategic level, organisations are concerned to position themselves in the knowledge economy and to turn their employees' knowhow into a managed asset. But organisational learning has largely been hijacked by IT, in the guise of knowledge management, while employers struggle to address the human issues associated with knowledge creation and exchange (Kettley and Hirsh, 2000). In this regard, one can find a good critique in the seminal work of Lave and Wenger (1991), who assert that the individualistic aspects of the cognitive focus characteristic of most theories of learning, as much as KM principles, seem to concentrate on the person, but in a reductive way. Thus, the cognitivist perspective sees the person as a primarily cognitive entity, tending to promote an impersonal, decontextualised view of knowledge, skills, tasks, activities and learning. As a consequence, both theoretical analyses and instructional prescriptions tend to be driven by reference to reified knowledge domains and by constraints imposed by the general requirements of universal learning mechanisms understood in terms of acquisition and assimilation of knowledge, like bits of information (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 52).

Situated learning theory, by contrast, focuses explicitly on the person and on issues of identity. In SLT, learning is not simply about developing one's knowledge and practice, but also involves a process of understanding who we are and in what communities of practice we belong and are accepted (Handley et al., 2006). Lave and Wenger (1991), the first to theorize situated learning, conceive of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. The person is defined by these relations as well as defining them. Learning thus implies

becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. In other words, identity, knowing and social membership entail one another (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 53).

Thus, as aptly stated by Gherardi et al. (1998), learning is not a way of coming to know the world, but a way of becoming part of the social world. Learning is the primary way to engage with others in an ongoing practice; it is what enables actors to modify their relations with others while contributing to the shared activity, including a possible degree of conflict. In this way, on-the-job learning is no longer equated with the appropriation or acquisition of items of work-related knowledge, but is understood as the development of a new identity based on participation in a system of situated practices. Learning is an act of belonging which necessarily requires involvement and cannot take place if participation is not possible. The professional development of members and the development of the practice sustained by the community go hand in hand; their identity and that of the community evolve in parallel. Competence and identity are inseparably intertwined and depend on recognized participation in a community of practice (Gherardi, 1997; Wenger, 1998). In this context, therefore, individuals develop practices by observing others, imitating them, then adapting and developing their own particular practices in ways which match not only the wider communityøs norms, but also their own individual sense of integrity and self (Handley et al., 2006). It is through participation in communities that individuals develop and possibly adapt and thereby reconstruct their identities and practice (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993; Breakwell, 1993; 2001).

Learning, therefore, so entangled with identity, is a relational activity and the relational modality which expresses the connection between subjects and their being-in-the-world in relation to other knowing subjectsô and to abstract knowledgeô is epistemic (Gherardi et al., 1998). Hence, the locus of learning shifts from the mind of the individual to the participatory framework in which it takes place. When applied to the workplace, this social perspective portrays on-the-job learning as an ongoing social activity aimed at discovering what is to be done, when and how to do it according to specific routines and using specific artefacts, and how to give a reasonable account of why it is done and of what sort of person one must become in order to be a competent member of that community (Gherardi, 1998). The discussion so far in this section confirms that the research choice of considering identity in relation to learning is well grounded, given that they fundamentally imply one another.

Germane to this argument are the remarks of Wenger (1998: 57) concerning members of the claims processing community of an insurance company, suggesting that their professional identity affected their personal and social identity: õThey do not cease to be claims processors at 5 o¢clock. Their participation is not something they simply turn off when they leave. Instead, the effects of participation are more enduring, and they influence the claims processorsø activitiesô and relationships outside the formal work-settingö. What SLT fails to consider directly is how the identity that has developed not only within but also beyond and before a particular CoP is able to affect the learning of a new work practice such as cross-functional teamwork. As also indicated earlier, this gap substantiates my main research question: How does identity affect the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork? Numerous commentators have shown that even where structural and normative commonalities have been produced, such as within

an organisationøs management, there may be considerable diversity, in terms, for example, of gender, ethnicity, class, occupation and generation, as well as spatial groupings such as regions and work locations, which can impact on relations and identifications, and which therefore need proper consideration (Handley et al., 2006; Whittington, 1992). This is one of the reasons why I consider it important to study the influence of identity on the learning of a new practice (the CFT). It theoretically justifies my attempt to deepen the link between identity and learning in SLT, where learning inevitably involves the construction of identities during participation in a work practice. However, as noted in the previous chapter, there is an empirical justification alongside this theoretical one. In other words, what emerged from the fieldwork explains my intention to explore more deeply the link between identity and learning, and the influence of the former on the latter.

We should note, however, that while there are valuable allusions to the link between identity and learning within the situated learning literature, there is little explicit reference to theories of identity construction, albeit the concept of identity implicitly rests on a critical reading of social identity theory (Handley et al., 2006). The only theorisation of identity provided by Lave and Wenger (1991) is that noted above, i.e. their conception of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practice. Besides, the person both defines and is defined by these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities. Thus, identity, knowing and social membership entail one another (Lave and Wenger,

1991). For this reason, the next section presents a more developed conceptualization of identity that complements SLT and helps making sense of the data.

3.4 What conceptualization of identity?

As briefly mentioned in chapter 1 and as better explained in the next chapter, my whole research has had a back-and-forth, iterative character in which concepts, conjectures and data have been in continuous interplay, which has occurred dynamically and even chaotically (Van Maanen et al., 2007: 1146). However, this flexibility in the connections within and between the conceptual and empirical planes represented the road to discovery (Van Maanen et al. 2007: 1146), so my work benefitted from the flexibility allowed by ethnography. I did not start with rigid ideas about what to do and what to study, i.e. I did not set out to test a theoretical model. From the setting itself emerged interesting issues worth investigating. I did know what a CFT was and how it should work according to the functionalist literature on the subject; I also kept in mind the theoretical insights provided by situated learning theory and the community of practice approach, and what appeared as the emergent issue on the ground was the role of team membersø identity in their ability to learn cross-functionality. In this interplay between theory and data, I realized that the way SLT conceptualised identity was insufficiently developed, as highlighted in the previous section, and that I therefore needed more sophisticated theoretical tools concerning identity in order to allow me to make sense of the data and its analysis. Thus began a hard-fought and laborious search for a conceptualization of identity to match my own views, which would aid in interpreting the data. I must be honest and say that I did not find in the theoretical panorama offered a position with which I could feel entirely comfortable. I would encounter either positions that were heuristically helpful but functionalist in orientation

and therefore decontextualised, or post-modern stances that I found sophisticated but unacceptably immanentist. I will therefore present a vision of identity that works its way through by tapping into theories which are distinct, but in my view do have parts that are congruent and complement each other. For example, one of the identity issues that emerged on the empirical plane concerned the relationship between team members and their leaders and it became apparent to me that this specific relation could be better understood by mobilizing some concepts from psychodynamics, such as the relation with a significant other, which augmented my theoretical reflections. This is why in the next sub-section I provide a discussion of the concepts that I draw upon in my interpretations. Let us preface this discussion by presenting identity in more ontological and anthropological terms.

I will articulate my exposition in a few key points which move from the individual through the relational to the social. First of all, although I do not consider myself a functionalist and although a unitary view of self is currently ascribed to functionalist positions (Collinson, 2006), I conceive of identity as a unitary self, a deep unity of body and soul, a soul which is spiritual and rational, a unity of heart and mind (Vanni Rovighi, 1996). Secondly, the nature of our unitary selves is essentially relational and I will rely on Paul Ricoeur (1992) to substantiate and support this point. This eminent philosopher argues that the self implies and is constituted by a relation between the same and the other. Selfhood implies otherness to such an extent that selfhood and otherness cannot be separated. Ricoeur explains that sameness is not selfhood. Sameness may denote a numerical identity, such as oneness or unity (as opposed to plurality). Sameness may also denote a qualitative identity such as a resemblance or similarity. It may also denote an uninterrupted continuity or a lack of variation and lack

of diversity. Selfhood, on the other hand, refers to the identity which belongs to an individual self and which is not the same as the identity belonging to another individual.

The third point is that this unitary, relational self is also social, as illustrated in what follows. Although not post-structuralist, my view of identity and the theoretical lenses adopted in this work shares with post-structuralism a certain questioning of the functionalist paradigm, with its tendency to separate individuals from society (Collinson, 2006). What I share with post-structuralist approaches is their contention that people's lives are inextricably interwoven with the social world around them (Layder, 1994) and that individuals are best understood as social selves (Burkitt, 1991) whose actions always have to be understood within their complex conditions and consequences (Giddens, 1984).

As stated above, I conceive identity as a singular, unitary entity of a body and a rational and spiritual soul, of heart and mind (Vanni Rovighi, 1996). In this, I differ from the post-structuralists, who emphasize its multiple, shifting, fragmented and non-rational character. Rather than viewing the self as an objectifiable, cognitive essence, post-structuralists argue that identity processes are fundamentally ambiguous and always in a state of flux and reconstruction. They suggest that identities are also frequently characterized by paradox and contradiction (Collinson, 2006). The fourth aspect of my stance on identity draws on these distinct positions and it reconciles them. In other words, the two things go together, rather than excluding each other: we are unitary rational selves, but also open, dynamic selves, capable, as attested by our everyday experience, of ambiguity, contradiction and paradox. Indeed, for me, the fact that we feel unease or even pain when we experience contradiction, paradox and so forth,

testifies that we are fundamentally unitary selves and that we tend towards unity, towards each identifying him or herself as one.

The last point helping us to further the conceptualization of identity is one I share with the post-structuralist Collinson (2006), who asserts that by simultaneously occupying many subjective positions, identities and allegiances, human beings construct – and, I would add, develop – co-existing identities from many different aspects of our lives, including ethnicity, religion, family, gender, age, occupation, nationality and politics. While elements of these multiple identities may be overlapping and mutually reinforcing, others can be in tension and even incompatible (Collinson, 2006). This aspect of Collinson's (2006) conceptualization can help to make sense of the data gathered during the fieldwork, and to define a second sub-question which contributes to making more explicit the overall research question and which can be phrased as follows: What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied?

As anticipated, with regard to the relation with significant others at work, the specific nature of this relationship between team members and the owners was such that it was best understood using psychodynamic categories. This is why I have also interpreted the identity of team members, linked with their relationship with their leaders, by mobilizing a few concepts from psychodynamic theory. In the next subsection I shall outline these concepts and explicate their value to my work.

3.4.1 Why tap into psychodynamics?

Gherardi (1999) contends that the challenge of learning can be seen in attempts to engage with the paradox, uncertainty and complexity of management and organisation.

This engagement requires an examination of the complex web of social relations through which learning occurs, as well as the impact of the emotions that are generated by attempts to learn and to prevent learning in organisations (Vince, 2001). As already shown, learning occurs primarily in the context of social relations and as a result of complex interactions, which are profoundly influenced by both individual and collective emotions (Vince, 2001). Furthermore, if it is accepted, as asserted in a previous section, that membership of a team is an emotionally significant aspect of identity and that learning can be driven by an emotional agenda, it is then necessary to use appropriate theoretical tools to address the issues of learning in a team and of learning to be a member of a team.

Current accounts of the reasons why organisations fail to learn are incomplete because, although they recognize cognitive limitations (Bettman and Weitz, 1983; Feldman, 1989), prior learning (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Weick, 1995), political games (Pfeffer, 1981) and certain cultural and structural features of organisations (Dodgson, 1993; Salaman and Butler, 1994) as barriers to learning, they ignore the role of psychodynamic factors in individual and organisational identity and the effects that such factors can have on learning (Brown and Starkey, 2000). This is why I introduce below a few key concepts from psychodynamics (unconscious drives, fantasies and dyadic bonds) to help to explain acceptance of or resistance to cross-functional working which, in certain instances of particular complexity, would otherwise be likely not to be understood.

Individual identity, according to Albert (1977), depends upon both one's personal identity and the identity that is shaped from one's relationships with others, although the effect of each of these two factors will differ between individuals and over time.

Laplanche and Pontalis (1988: 205) capture the essence and importance of the notion of identification by defining it as a õpsychological process whereby the subject assimilates an aspect, property or attribute of the other and is transformed, wholly or partially, after the model the other provides. It is by means of a series of identifications that the personality is constituted and specified.ö

The assertion above that membership of a team is an emotionally significant aspect of oneøs identity is also consistent with Freudøs conviction that identification is associated with õemotional contentö. In developing his second theory of the mind, Freud posited the now familiar realms of id, ego and super-ego. In so doing he was forced to reconsider some of his previous ideas. Freud continued to view the id as the cauldron in which primal instinctual drives competed for expression. The id is entirely in the realm of the unconscious, whereas the ego is that province of the mind that uses logic, memory and judgment as appropriate to a) satisfy the demands of the id; b) postpone satisfaction; or c) suppress these demands (Carr and Lapp, 2009). In making such a decision, the ego has to take into account the reality of the external world and draw upon past, present and forecast experiences. Freud asserted that this aspect of the egoøs functioning was in accord with a õreality principleö (Freud, 1923/1984: 363). Consequently, the ego must also take into account the social acceptability of carrying through the demands of the id and it is at this point that Freud discusses the province of the self that he calls the super-ego (Carr and Lapp, 2009).

The super-ego obtains a script about societal rules from identification with parents and other authority figures. It is provided with a sense of what not to do, as well as of what behaviours and aspirations are acceptable or desirable. The latter positive script is what Freud called an ego-ideal, which again is initially derived from positive identification

with a loving and reassuring parent or parental figure. Throughout one's life, the ego-ideal is established and re-established through the process of identification. Thus, the super-ego functions in both a positive and negative manner: inasmuch as it performs the role of censor to the options and wishes of the ego, it also acts to direct the ego to an idealized self to which the individual aspires (Carr and Lapp, 2009). From Freud's new perspective, looking at the manner in which the mind is managed – that is, from the point of view of the ego – failure to meet the demands and restrictions voiced by the super-ego results in "punishment" in the form of anxiety, guilt and shame, if the ego fails to properly manage its own house (Carr and Lapp, 2009).

In becoming members of a work group or of an organisation, individuals certainly surrender some of their individuality. The degree to which this occurs depends upon the strength of both their projective and their introjective identification (Carr, 1999). If these identifications have been continually reinforced through various forms of gratification, then the sense of a created identity can be so strong that the prohibitive aspect of the super-ego may be disregarded and, as others have commented, "its functions taken over by the group ideals" (Sandler, 1960: 156-7; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1976). In the work organisation it can be readily comprehended how the reified organisation and/or its leaders could be raised to the status of an ego-ideal (Carr, 1999).

We can see how psychodynamics can open valuable windows into the world of organisations and management, offering insights that are startlingly original, have extensive explanatory powers and can find ample practical implementations (Gabriel and Carr, 2002). The existing CFT literature lacks a proper consideration of how learning in cross-functional teams is linked to emotions, to what they are triggered by and to what they can trigger.

Keeping in mind the density of the identity construct elaborated so far, it is possible to derive a further sub-question as follows: How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated?

It should be noted that identity is in itself a very interesting topic of research. Indeed, it currently attracts much attention in very diverse disciplines, indicating its potential in cohering multiple levels of analysis; and its capacity for integrating analytical insights at the micro-, meso- and macro-levels further underscores this cohering potential (Brown, 2001). As Albert et al. (2000: 13) have argued, õthe power of identity and identification derives from the integrative and generative capacity of these constructsö.

Thus, it could be said that the challenge in my work is to find a way of developing and deploying concepts of identity which are attractive across traditional social scientific boundaries, to offer the potential for multiple kinds of insightful analysisô social, psychological, psychodynamic and organisational (Brown, 2001)ô and to relate it to learning in the specific context of cross-functional teams. It is exactly because identity is complex and problematic, yet so critical, that its dynamics need to be better understood (Albert et al., 2000). Those studies that have been conducted (e.g. Dutton and Dukerich, 1991), belonging to a more functionalist tradition, have taken a fairly broad-brush approach which has rarely captured adequately the subtleties and complexities of the dynamics of these processes (Brown, 2001). For social identity theory (Tajfel, 1972), which belongs to this more functionalist stream, processes of identification involve relatively simple processes of categorisation of the self and others, driven by an imperative for cognitive simplification and a need for self-esteem (Brown, 2001).

Finally, it should be noted that the current level of research interest in these issues perhaps indicates a realisation of just how significant such dynamics are to the understanding of human relations in contemporary organisations (Tedeschi and Riess, 1981; Snyder et al., 1983; Morrison and Biess, 1991).

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has pursued the thread followed in the previous chapter. First, I explored the CFT literature to discuss what these (very few) studies have said about identity. I noted that the focus on this construct is fairly restrictive, being limited to functional identity and collective team identification; some pointers suggest that the social context and emotion are important, but there is no further specification and no attention to the situated context where CFT members work. I then advocated an alternative to the functionalist approach more able to capture the complexity of the identity construct by also considering the situated embedded context so as to achieve a better and deeper understanding of it in CF teaming. Next, drawing on SLT, already adopted as the theoretical frame for learning, I further explored the link between identity and learning, basically acknowledging that they profoundly entail one another. However, SLT fails to directly consider how the identity that has developed not only within but also beyond and before a particular CoP is able to affect the learning of a new work practice, focusing instead on the impact of learning on identity. This has helped to shape more clearly the appropriateness of my main research question, concerning the way that identity affects the learning of the CFT practice. I next argued that SLT lacks an open, explicit theorization of identity and stated that this interest in identity also has an empirical foundation, since identity is one of the issues emerging from the fieldwork. I therefore proposed a conceptualization of identity which, drawing on distinct traditions,

argues that we are unitary selves who construct and develop many identities derived from different aspects of our lives, such as relationships, occupation and nationality. Importantly, these are to sensitise us to what actually happens on the empirical plane where the different meanings defining identity as a sense of unitary self emerge. This led to the posing of a second sub-question, asking what identity issues emerge as most relevant to the context studied. Subsequently, I claimed that the specificity of the relationship between team members and CarparCo leaders calls for an interpretation which mobilizes a few concepts from psychodynamics. I therefore introduced some concepts from this theoretical perspective. With this dense identity construct in mind, I posed a third and final sub-question, asking how different learning outcomes can be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated. Thus, I have one main question and three more specific sub-questions, derived from an interpretative perspective which, at least in part, questions the fundamentally functionalist stance found in the existing CFT and identity literature, opening to a more promising person-centred approach.

Having presented what I set out to discover, spelled out research questions and theoretically framed the focus of my research, it is now time to discuss how I sought the answers to my questions. The next chapter, therefore, considers the various methodological issues affecting the different stages of my research.

Chapter 4

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 presented a theoretical and conceptual integration of the three main themes of this thesis: identity, learning and cross-functional teamwork. It delineated a set of issues from the broad literature review (chapter 2) and theoretical lenses to be utilised to examine the phenomena under study. In this chapter, I shall consider those aspects of my research which more closely concern methodology. It begins with some philosophical groundwork, establishing which sociological paradigm best represents this study, including ontological, epistemological and broad methodological assumptions (section 4.2). The next section (4.3) moves on to more methodological matters, explaining why the case study was chosen as the research design. Once this design has been presented and justified, I will describe how I actually carried it out and why, starting with a brief description of the pilot study stage (section 4.4) and of the gaining access phase (section 4.5). Next comes a discussion of which specific methods and techniques I decided to adopt in order to substantiate and build my case study, in particular ethnography as method and the related techniques: observation, interviews and documentation (section 4.6). A discussion of how these qualitative data were collected could not be deemed complete without a subsequent consideration of reflexivity issues (section 4.7). Thereafter, I explain how the dataset was analysed (section 4.8) and how questions of credibility and dependability were dealt with (section 4.9). The chapter closes with a summary (section 4.10).

4.2 Some philosophical and theoretical assumptions

Reflecting upon research paradigms, I was generally aware of what is presented in the research literature regarding qualitative and quantitative research paradigms and their associated philosophical assumptions (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Given the specific focus of this study on identity and learning, and given their conceptualisation as relational and processual phenomena, õconceiv[ing] of identities as long-term, living relations between persons and their place and participation in communities of practiceö (Lave and Wenger, 1991:52), I concluded that a qualitative approach to this research was most appropriate. As argued by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), since identity lacks sufficient substance and discreteness, it cannot be captured using surveys and quantitative data alone. Besides, the adoption of a qualitative stance is very frequently reported in the literature concerned with learning as practice and therefore as a social and processual phenomenon (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Cook and Yanow, 1993; Roberts, 2006; Gherardi and Nicolini, 2000). Taking a step further in specifying my theoretical stance, the sociological paradigm which by analogy can best help to understand my work is interactionism, referring in particular to the ideas of Simmel (1950) and of Mead (1934). Reflecting both on the key place of interaction in the situated learning literature and on my own views concerning human nature and the crucial importance of relations/interactions, I found Simmel and Mead particularly able to describe my position, due to their focus on relations between individuals and the acknowledgement of humansø relational nature. Although I did not use Simmeløs or Meadøs method, nor was I led by them analytically, they helped me to better explain the theoretical reflections which are at the basis of my thesis, in particular ontology and epistemology.

Mead's position as reflected in *Mind, Self and Society* can be interpreted as being close to that of Simmel. Although their theories and ideas differ in many important respects, they are both committed to an interactionist form of analysis, focusing upon individuals in a social context. For both, the realm of social affairs is essentially processual in nature, characterised by an underlying form expressed through social interaction. The study of this interaction is central to their social theories, which in the case of both writers are firmly geared to providing an explanation of the *status quo* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979).

My focus on relationships with significant others and on the local and social context finds close correspondence with Simmel's sociological interests. His analysis involves social forms such as dyadic and triadic relationships and group processes (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Thus, my interest in investigating the learning of a particular kind of teamwork practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), starting with the interactions within the team and within the larger social and organizational context, which became part of individuals' identity, is also well represented by the theoretical stance of Simmel, who focused his attention upon human beings in their social context. In the words of Coser (1965:5), Simmel was concerned with the study of society as an intricate web of multiple relations established among individuals in constant interaction with one another.

Another important element of Simmel's perspective which I found consonant with my view of human nature– and with how human nature emerges throughout my study– is that despite his concern for form and pattern in social affairs, Simmel was by no means a strict determinist. His work is characterised by what Coser (1965) describes as an emphasis on a õdialectical tension between the individual and societyö, in which the

individual, although a product of his social world, also stands apart. õThe individual is determined, yet determining, acted upon, yet self-actuatingö (Coser, 1965:10-11). Meadøs position too is far from being deterministic. Rejecting the notion of simple stimulus-response models of human behaviour, Mead recognises the role played by human beings in influencing their environment, particularly through symbolic interpretation of the consequences of various types of environmental conditions and modes of interaction. Individual actors are thus accorded a mediating and interpretive roleô and in many instances a controlling or creative oneô in relation to their environment (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). By the same token, individuals in CarparCo, for example, were not necessarily determined in their behaviours and actions by their interactions with the owners as significant others; they had and exercised the freedom to interpret those interactions in different ways, which could lead to different outcomes.

Having shown that my anthropological view is in line with Simmeløs and Meadøs conception of human will as essentially free, I must state that my ontological position is close to that of Mead, for whom there is an external world which influences human thought and action (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). I am also close epistemologically to Mead, whose stance can be characterized as ÷objective relativismø, where õqualities of the object may yet be relative to a conditioning organismö (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:76). However, I prefer to describe my own position as ÷objective relativityø, since the ÷ismø ending seems to denote too extreme a position. Thus, I acknowledge that other researchers might interpret the same data differently, but I also contend that interpretations are not unlimited in number or equally valuable, since the essential, archetypal, teleologically intelligible meaning is already attached to each object and this meaning orients actions and interpretations. Besides, my view is that the little piece of

trouth that I hope to be able to bring to light would not be invalidated by other possible interpretations; rather, it would be improved, enlarged and deepened.

As to methodology, whilst interactionism places itself broadly within the nomothetic approach, which is preoccupied with the construction of scientific tests and the making of assumptions about the nature of social science (Burrell and Morgan, 1979:10, 71), my research focus on identity and learning conceptualized as social and processual phenomena, and my research questions aimed at explanation building, call for an ideographic approach. My assessment was that in order to understand how identity affected the learning of CFT work practice, I had to adopt an ideographic approach, i.e. one based on the view that one can understand the social world only by obtaining first-hand knowledge of the subject under investigation. It thus places considerable stress upon getting close to one's subject and exploring its detailed background and life history (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). This is why I opted for ethnography, where prolonged observations and semi-structured interviews allowed me to obtain rich data on the way teams were working cross-functionally and to investigate the possible associations with identity issues.

Finally, it should be noted that although my study is not problem-orientated in approach, i.e. concerned to provide practical solutions to practical problems (Burrell and Morgan, 1979), my conception of research and knowledge production is pragmatic in orientation; in other words, it is concerned to understand society in a way that generates knowledge which does not merely contribute to an academic discipline (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998), but which can be put to use for the improvement of people's living and working conditions. For example, during fieldwork, as my knowledge and understanding of managers' situation became clearer, I made an effort to help owners

see their influence on this situation and stimulate them to consider things from a broader and more situated perspective. Another example is the report that I produced at the end of my fieldwork, which was also intended to provide knowledge that could help daily work life in CarparCo connected with cross-functional teamwork.

4.3 Case study as the right research strategy

The case study is a widely used research design and a recognised research strategy in its own right (Yin, 2009; Hartley, 2004; Stake, 2008). One of the features of case study design that I found attractive was its inherent ability to provide rich and deep data, collected through the use of a variety of methods (Hartley, 2004). This facilitated a critical and engaging mode of inquiry, whilst enabling my study to account for social or organisational processes, be they formal or informal (Robson 2002:179).

Generally, there is a variety of case study approaches, including *descriptive*, *exploratory*, *explanatory* (Yin, 2009:21), *hypothesis-generating*, *hypothesis-testing* and *theory-guided* cases (Levy 2008:3). The choice of the case study as research strategy is to be linked to the explanatory nature of the enquiry I wanted to pursue and the ensuing research questions which, as we have seen in chapter 2 and 3, are ‑howø and ‑whatø questions (Yin, 2003). In addition, the case study was an appropriate strategy since as investigator I had little control over events and because the focus was on a contemporary phenomenon (Yin, 2003). It should be noted that case studies are suitable for investigating and capturing real-life events (a phenomenon: learning cross-functional teamwork practice), in their natural settings (its context: a car components factory in the north of Italy) (Yin, 2004). The distinctive need for a case study arose from the desire to understand a complex social phenomenonô the impact of identity on

learning CFT practiceô and from my need to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003).

As mentioned above, adopting the case study approach gave me the opportunity to deal with the full variety of evidence (Yin, 2003) which emerged from the ethnography I undertook, such as direct field observations, extended formal and informal interviews and the review of documents. Overall, interviews were an essential source of evidence, because my research, as with most case studies, is concerned with human affairs (Yin, 2003). These human affairs were reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, while well-informed respondents provided important insights into situations. They also provided shortcuts to the prior history of the firm and its intricacies, helping to identify other relevant sources of evidence (Yin, 2003).

4.4 Pilot study

Given the complexity and relative novelty of the theme studied and of the approach adopted, I planned from the time of the initial research proposal to conduct a pilot study before the main case study. As Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue, it is advisable to carry out a pilot study before devoting oneself to the arduous and significant time commitment of a qualitative study. So, during the summer of 2007, after upgrading, I spent six weeks in the Standard Chartered Bank in London for a work placement that also served as a pilot study. I consider this experience very valuable and positive in providing me with specific knowledge of HR, improving my research skills and enhancing my personal growth. On day one I was assigned to the Talent Management Group within HR, with the specific task of carrying out research on TM knowledge among HR managers at a global level. I therefore completed 21 semi-structured telephone interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes each with human resource relational

managers from all over the world. This gave me the opportunity to practice my interviewing skills, especially in consideration of the highly demanding setting. The data produced during these interviews were summarised in a report that I then submitted to the company. I was also able to practice direct observation as a participant observer in the very long hours spent every day in the bank. I often had very friendly conversations with porters as well as with top managers, always with a kind attitude and, at the same time, also careful to catch relevant signs or information. I consider this as partial training for my subsequent ethnography. Besides, this period in Standard Chartered gave me good insight into work dynamics, especially about identity and commitment controlling mechanisms. At the end of this time, however, I realised that it would not have been possible to work and to do my ethnography simultaneously, due to the very high level of time and energy demand in such work environments. Finally, Standard Chartered proved not to be the right place for the full ethnographic study, because cross-functional teams met only monthly as management committees, offering insufficient data for my research goals.

4.5 Gaining access

Finding the right fieldwork setting can be a daunting task. One useful approach is to allow the key theoretical ideas of my thesis (chapter 2 and 3) to aid the selection process (Levy, 2008:7). In addition to the theoretical inspirations and what was theoretically desirable, I was mindful of the practical considerations that a researcher must make, such as negotiating access, time, economy and other logistics (Robson, 2002). As Yin (2003) rightly points out, doing a case studyô and research in general, I would addô requires adaptiveness and flexibility, since unexpected events may cause a change in this or that aspect of oneøs plan. And so it happened. Having realized during my pilot

study that Standard Chartered bank was not the right place for my investigations, I started looking for another research site. I therefore contacted a number of financial institutions, given that the initial focus was on this kind of organization. Finally, in December 2007, thanks to some good networking carried out by Blind in Business,[2] I obtained a meeting with the head of innovation and research at Lloyds Bank in London. The meeting went well, I presented my research project and was eventually granted access to the site for my research. However, after going home for the Christmas holiday, severe personal and health issues made me decide that it would be wiser to remain in Italy. Again, contact was made with organisations of many kinds based in Italy, through friends and relatives. An Italian friend of mine, a doctoral researcher, introduced me to an associate professor in Bergamo University, who then very kindly arranged a meeting with the HR and organization manager of the car parts factory where I eventually carried out my fieldwork. After this first meeting at Bergamo University, the lecturer also offered to support me in the presentation I gave at CarparCo to explain my research project to the management. Following this meeting with the company, the HR manager, after consulting each manager and the owners, told me that they had all agreed to grant me access for data collection, hoping, of course, to derive some benefit for the organization itself. I agreed to the terms of this access, which entailed protection of the anonymity of the firm and of each individual involved in the research, and to preserve the confidentiality of the data. I also agreed to produce, at the end of my fieldwork, a report for the company itself. Although the first contact with CarparCo's HR manager occurred in February 2008, some political issues internal to the firm delayed the start of the ethnography until late May 2008. Actually, this delay was providential, because my

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[2] Blind in Business is a registered charity which operates across the United Kingdom. It helps blind and partially sighted students into work through training and employment services.

health was poor and I needed time to recover before conducting the fieldwork. Meanwhile, I was also advised by my supervisors to suspend my registration for a while until I was fit again to work at my PhD on a full-time basis.

4.6 Ethnography as research method

Ethnography has its roots in social anthropology, where researchers attempted to understand the social interactions and cultures of societies by placing themselves within the host society and adopting the social anthropological canons of õwatch, hear and learnö (Malinowski, 1922). Ethnography lends itself to the study of human beings living in complex networks, in which the natural and human world is given particular meaning and significance (Geertz, 1973). The culture of social groups such as the CarparCo CFTs is made up of these complex networks of meaning; ethnography was chosen precisely because through it an interpretation and understanding of CarparCoøs culture and of the dynamics amongst its members could be developed (Geertz, 1973). I chose an ethnographic case study because it could provide a means of conducting fieldwork inside an organized group of individuals (Geertz, 1973), allowing me to study CarparCo in general and the cross-functional teams in particular. Given that this method is suitable for õthe study of human beings in social interactionö (Wolcott, 1995: 19), it was appropriate to study the interactions amongst members within each CFT and more broadly within the organization.

The definition of the term -ethnographyø has been subject to controversy. For some, it refers to a philosophical paradigm to which one makes a total commitment, while for others, including me, it designates a method that one uses as and when appropriate. Of course, there are also positions between these extremes (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998:111). In practical terms, ethnography usually refers to forms of social research

having a substantial number of the following features: a strong emphasis on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena, rather than setting out to test hypotheses; a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data, meaning data that have not been coded at the point of collection in terms of a closed set of analytic categories; and the detailed investigation of a small number of cases; analysis of data that involves explicit interpretation of the meanings and functions of human actions, the product of which mainly takes the form of verbal descriptions and explanations (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998:112). Over the following sections, we shall see that these characteristics can largely be found in my study, which is therefore to be seen as ethnography.

4.6.1 Ethnography: gradually finding focus

As mentioned above, the flexibility allowed by ethnography was particularly beneficial for my research. It proved to be extremely important not to start with rigid ideas about what to do and what to study. The setting itself offered an attractive and meaningful puzzle to compose and interpret, so an attempt was made to avoid too rigid a prior commitment to specific theoretical models (Jacob, 1987, 1989; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Stake, 1983; Van Maanen et al., 1982). I therefore approached the field of research with few preconceptions or expectations and let the setting speak freely to my sensibility. Ethnographic research is notable for its characteristic ‑funnelø structure, being progressively focused over its course. In progressive focusing, the research problem is developed or transformed over time, until eventually its scope is clarified and delimited and its internal structure explored (Silverman, 2006). Thus, as happened in the present study, it is frequently only over the course of the research that the researcher discovers what the research is ‑really aboutø and it is not uncommon for it to turn out to be about

something quite remote from the initially foreshadowed problems (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983:175). Of course, I began with research questions about the extent of learning observed to occur in the CFTs relative to what their members said and about what could account for differences in the learning of the CF teamwork practice, but it was also clear that I might have needed to change and develop them according to the data gathered in the field (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). In effect, a refinement process occurred throughout the fieldwork. As I attended meetings, interviewed people and observed the firm at close quarters, I could not see that power and conflict, two theoretical categories from SLT which I had especially kept in mind approaching the field, were major issues within the two skilled workersø teams under observation. Instead, I began to realize that the prevalent issues were the relationships of these employees with the owners and the strong socio-cultural dimension characterizing these individuals.

Given my long period with the firm and the good rapport that I established with key informants, I came to know about the Auto team meetings and sensed that they could be significant, so I obtained permission to attend some of them and to interview managers about this and about other organizational structures where managers had to work in a cross-functional fashion. It was thus through this process that I worked out that it was important to study each team and then compare them. In fact, the opportunity to compare such distinct groups of employees gave more weight to the evidence already emerging about the relationship with the owners and the socio-cultural aspect; it also gradually led me to see that these issues were deeply connected with identity and that this influenced the ability of both workers and managers to learn CF teamwork practice.

4.6.2 A fruitful harvest: how I produced the data

The process of data production at CarparCo started in May 2008 and ended in October 2009. The techniques adopted for data collection included direct observation, semi-structured interviews, field notes and the study of organizational documents. I shall now consider each of these in turn.

First, it should be noted that when ethnography is undertaken in organizations a number of choices are to be made: the extent to which it is participant or non-participant, covert or non-covert, unstructured or structured (McAuley, 2008). I opted for a non-participant stance so as to take a more explicitly ÷distantø view of events, behaviours and communications in the organization. A second area of choice in methods is to take a covert or overt approach to the ethnography. I adopted an overt approach. Thus, at the beginning of my ethnography, through official presentations and unofficial exchanges, I made clear to those at CarparCo my intent in undertaking the research. Although this approach may not reach the deeper areas of the organizational life, its ethical implications are often considered to be less onerous than covert research (McAuley, 2008:89-91). Besides, having decided that working for CarparCo was not feasible, there was no other role but that of researcher which I could have adopted. The third key choice made by ethnographers is around the issue of unstructured or structured processes of observation. I decided to follow a largely unstructured pattern, where I followed the action and often used my intuition in order to develop an understanding of behaviours, processes and actions. Of course, team meetings were planned and I scheduled interviews. However, as to informal interviews or ÷corridor chatø, I followed my hunches and made use of the knowledge of organizational issues that I was gradually acquiring, in order to decide whether or not it was appropriate to have a

further meeting with somebody. Sometimes, it felt necessary to talk simply to build rapport with team members or other employees who might, in my view, become key informants. Besides, my time with the firm, especially in the pumps programming office and in the technical office, depended not only on my schedule but also on employeesø schedules.

Thus, after presenting my research to CarparCo managers in April 2008 and subsequently gaining access, I held another presentation, around the middle of May 2008, this time with the highly skilled workers who were members of the joints CFT and the water pumps CFT, in order to introduce myself, to explain the research project and my presence in the factory, and to answer their questions on the matter. Before starting to attend meetings of the two CFTs, I carried out a first round of interviews with their members, as explained more fully in section 4.6.5. At the end of May 2008, I therefore started attending these two teamsø meetings on a monthly basis, except for extraordinary situations where an extra meeting was needed. I was given permission to record with my digital aid and to ask questions at the end of the meeting if needed. All participants were very kind and collaborative.

Then, in July 2008, I felt that it was time to have a managerial point of view, since it had became clear that managers too were at least partly involved in and affected by the skilled workersø CFTs. I therefore conducted semi-structured interviews with those managers related in some way to the two CFTs that I was already studying. The managers were talkative and fairly open, enough to provide me with expected and unexpected hints, for instance on the role of the founder, who had died three years earlier. Additionally, in September 2008, my supervisors and I agreed that it would be useful to do some job shadowing, so I obtained permission for this and between

September 2008 and April 2009 I spent a few days in the production office and in the technical office. In each office I was given a desk where I would spend half a day, but not on a regular basis. As mentioned above, it would depend partly on what was going on in the offices: if, for instance, they had a training course or an inspection from the quality certification body, it was more sensible not to go. I was also careful not to saturate the environment, so to speak, by spending too much time there; I tried to ensure that people were familiar enough with me, but not bored with my presence, so that they would remain willing to interact with me. While seeking a balance between familiarity and boredom, I also had to take into consideration my poor health, which meant that I could manage no more than two or three days of fieldwork per week, needing the remaining time to recover, to transcribe when appropriate and to prepare for forthcoming site visits.

At my desk, I would take notes on my laptop, paying attention to what was going on and listening to what was being said. In the meantime, I was able to have informal talks of variable length with some key informants with whom I had established a good rapport. Job shadowing aside, it should also be noted that having to travel by train, I might arrive earlier than the time the CFT meetings were held, or leave some time after they had finished. In this way, I found myself spending additional time on site, which created opportunities to talk with people and to keep abreast of what was going on in the firm.

Another significant source of data was the numerous informal exchanges I had with my gatekeeper, the HR and organization manager, who very kindly used to drive me to and from the railway station. On those brief journeys and while waiting for the train to come, we established a good rapport, always professional and correct, but such that it

was easy to talk and to do so fruitfully. Since the return journey between my home and the factory took nearly four hours, I would try to have a full agenda when I was on site. This entailed having lunch with my gatekeeper and some managers too. Ethnographic fieldwork allows researchers to develop a sense of õwhat, when, and under what circumstances it is appropriate to ask something and when it is better to remain quietö (Wolcott, 1995:102). Thus, my investigations did not stop even during these lunches, where I listened attentively and was careful in choosing what to say and what to ask.

When during one of these lunches I heard that a group of managers was working on a project to supply original equipment to Auto and once the managers were constituted as a CFT, with weekly meetings, I sensed that it was worth looking into that as well. I was beginning to appreciate the difference in effectiveness between workersø and managersø teaming. Having heard colourful stories of management committees and seeing them as loci of cross-functionality, I decided to observe some management committee (ManCo) meetings as well, so as to strengthen the dataset on managersø CF teamwork. Luckily, I was able to attend and record a few Auto team and ManCo meetings. Managers on the Auto team and on the ManCo, including owners, were all interviewed on the Auto project and on the ManCoøs particular dynamics. These interviews were rather demanding, due especially to the sensitivity of the topics addressed, such as the difficulties faced by the managers and the role of the owners in favouring these difficulties. However, these interviews turned out to be very telling and possibly helpful for both myself and the interviewees.

It is important to underline, therefore, that I undertook close observation of the groups and of the firm, establishing a rapport with people, both in more formal situations like the initial presentations, interviews and meetings, and in less formal ones like taking

coffee with team members, or chatting with the receptionists. In any case, I always made an effort to select carefully the people with whom I thought I should talk.

However, ethnography involves more than collecting data: õA crucial aspect of fieldwork lies in recognizing when to be unmethodical, when to resist the potentially endless task of accumulating data and to begin searching instead for underlying relationships and meaningsö (Wolcott, 1995-13). Thus, in September 2009, I felt that I had to draw my investigation to a conclusion but that it could not be deemed complete without a last round of interviews with the workersø teams, nearly 18 months having passed since the first round. All participants agreed to be interviewed again and showed much interest in the contribution my research could make to the company in general and to their specific jobs in particular. So, as initially agreed with my gatekeeper, I wrote and sent a report focusing on the positive dynamics and performance of the skilled workersø CFTs, drawing from my analysis a sort of best practice guidance for CF teaming, which managers were invited to follow for effective CF teaming. I was glad to work on this report, since it gave me an opportunity to show my gratitude to the firm for the hospitality it had extended to me during my 18 months as a researcher. It also gave me the opportunity, as mentioned above regarding my conception of research and knowledge production as pragmatic in orientation, to provide knowledge which could be put to use for the advancement of CarparCoøs employeesøworking conditions.

4.6.3 Field notes

Over the entire time of my fieldwork, I took field notes in a diary which I usually compiled at the end of the day or, when possible, whilst I was still on site. In this diary I noted the contents of conversations which might be of interest to my research, my impressions of what had happened on site that day and some reflexive comments on

what I did or how I felt in my role as researcher during that specific day. I also took notes on a few phone calls I had, either with my gatekeeper or with some other manager with whom I had agreed to discuss by phone a certain issue which I had perceived as relevant to my investigations, in terms of knowledge either specifically related to CF teaming or broadly useful in providing a more detailed picture of CarparCo. These field notes became very valuable when I reached the analysis and writing stages, where I had to regain a more accurate feel and memory of the firm, of events, of people, of their attitudes and opinions, and of my impressions and understanding of what I was directly observing. Furthermore, in the actual analysis, I used these notes to provide a sufficiently detailed picture of the context, the characters and the situations considered. Finally, field notes represented a precious source of data in turning narratives into stories, as illustrated later in this chapter.

4.6.4 Documentation

I also explored a few documents. This set of data, all made available electronically, comprised reports on the outcomes of the pumps and joints teams in developing the product range, minutes of meetings and charts. All this material was provided by my gatekeeper, by team leaders and by team members. Although I eventually did not use all of this documentation, it all contributed to increasing my knowledge of the firm, of the teams I was specifically observing, of the individuals, of communication styles and of the dynamics between individuals. Reports, in particular, testified to the progress made by the skilled workersø teams and the performance targets achieved by both the joints and pumps teams.

4.6.5 Interviews

Since time alone does not guarantee the breadth, depth or accuracy of information (Wolcott, 1995: 78), nor insight (Hammersley, 1992), observation is not sufficient and requires supplementing with interviews (Czarniawska, 1998). In this way, according to Czarniawska (1998), the material collected via interviews and that collected via observations complement each other. The interview format that seemed most appropriate to my research needs and aims was the semi-structured one, since it provides sufficient structure to enable the collection of some standard information from respondents, such as demographics, coupled with flexibility in terms of issues discussed with respondents within an organizational context (Hammersley & Atkinson 1983; Holstein 1995; Holstein & Gubrium 1997; Mishler 1986), such as perceptions of the dynamics and effectiveness of CFTs. I was therefore able to exploit some of the positive qualities of this method, such as its openness in framing the questions and its facilitating of in-depth probing, which can yield deeper insights and interpretations of the subject matter (Bernard, 2000; King, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Overall, skilled workers and most managers were formally interviewed twice, a few other managers and owners only once. For each set of interviews I prepared a template with questions. For the first round of interviews, the questions contained in the template ranged from demographic data such as the interviewee's age, place of birth and of residence to his seniority, current and past roles in the firm. This would help me to obtain some initial knowledge of who my interviewees were, especially from a professional point of view. I then explored interviewees' perceptions of how the CFT was working and of how good or bad the team dynamics were, as well as their understanding of the reasons why these teams had been established at CarparCo. This

allowed interviewees to express their views fairly openly and permitted me to further probe or enquire into specific issues that emerged during interviews. It should be added that the first round of interviews allowed the interviewees and me to get to know each other, while helping me to gain an initial picture of the company and of the climate within which its teams functioned. Moreover, since I am blind, this first round of interviews helped me to match voices to names and roles, thus making subsequent interactions easier, because I would be better able to identify my interlocutors.

The first round of interviews with skilled workers (joints and pumps CFTs) was carried out a week after I had made a presentation to them and a few managers, explaining in broad terms my aims and role as a researcher at CarparCo. As to the managers, I conducted the first round of interviews with them a few months later, in July 2008, as mentioned in the previous section. The interviewees were those managers who were most closely involved with the two skilled workersø teams and the interview questions included some demographic ones similar to those posed to the workers, and others eliciting their views on the skilled workersøCFTs.

The second round of interviews was again conducted in a semi-structured format with a template of questions, but open to further probing and elaboration. Unlike the first round, it began with managers: during the spring of 2009 I investigated the Auto team and the other two organizational structures, the management committees and the projected (but never realized) operations team, where managers had to work in a cross-functional fashion. Here, I was able to ask interviewees questions to elicit their reflections about team dynamics, perceptions of possible explanations for the quality of cross-functional teaming enacted and so forth. Sensing that it was a difficult topic for managers, I tactfully posed questions on Mario Rossi, the late founder, to gain a better

understanding of his influence on the ability of today's managers to work cross-functionally.

In September 2009, I had the valuable opportunity to interview the owners. For these four interviews I prepared an ad hoc template of questions which again followed a semi-structured format, ranging from demographics to questions on their roles in the firm over time and that of Mario, brother of one of the interviewees and father of the remaining three, who was the founder of CarparCo. These interviews were demanding, because I felt that I had to show the owners that they had been wise to let me into their firm and because of the topics discussed, such as the dead founder/father/brother, or their heavy presence in CarparCo. However, these interviews turned out to be intense and telling. Finally, between September and mid-October 2009, I interviewed for the second and final time the joints and pumps team members. The format adopted was still semi-structured, as I had a few key issues that I wanted to touch upon, concerning the learning of the CFT work practice, while needing the flexibility to ask further questions arising from the specific accounts my interviewees were giving.

Each of the 48 interviews lasted around 60 to 90 minutes and was digitally recorded. Although in the initial presentation my gatekeeper and I made it clear that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed and endorsed in a formal written agreement, at the beginning of each interview I asked permission to record it and reminded the interviewee of the complete anonymity and confidentiality of its content. Furthermore, at the outset of the interview I made clear that the interviewee was free not to answer any question that he did not feel at ease answering. These formal interviews were supplemented by informal ones following meetings if I needed clarification of what had just been discussed.

4.7 Reflexivity: me, myself and I

In this section, I shall provide a few considerations on reflexivity, concerning first my role as a researcher and then my particular status as a blind researcher.

4.7.1 Good relations give one the edge

The main risk in an ethnographic study is often said to be that of the researcher losing detachment and becoming too involved to be impartial. The argument is that in õgoing nativeö, one will lose oneøs analytical judgement through over-identification, to which Coffey (1999) retorts that the involvement of the researcher in the field is a strength rather than a weakness of ethnography: becoming close to the field may actually enhance the research that is produced. During my ethnographic study, the human and relational sides indeed played significant roles. I made constant efforts to have good and meaningful interactions with each person I came into contact with at CarparCo, however brief and occasional these might have been. I was aware of the importance of presenting myself, of my outward look and manners, so I tried to be and appear calm, to smile, to show empathy and benevolence, but also to engage in an intelligently critical manner with my interlocutors. Obviously, while maintaining each of these components sufficiently, I then adjusted my attitudes, the content and depth of conversations, their closeness and distance, depending on whom I was talking to.

> The interconnectedness of researcher, researched, social actors and significant others is the very essence of fieldwork. To a large extent the quality of the research experience (for all involved) and the quality of the research data is dependent upon the formation of relationships and the development of an emotional connection to the field (Coffey, 1999: 56-7).

Certainly, I wanted and needed people to like me and trust me, so I acted in a way that would make this possible. However, I must also note that I tried to make people feel understood andô why notô even loved, for what they were and not only because I had an interest in them as part of my research. For instance, during interviews or informal exchanges, I would listen to them when they needed to vent a personal or a professional worry, feeling and showing sympathy for them and then trying to reassure them and, if possible, trying to find a solution together. On other occasions I would take them little presents; for example, when my gatekeeper told me that he had learned that he was intolerant to a number of foods, I gave him a bag of products for people with such intolerances. The serendipitous outcome is that this made a difference to how much I was able to capture and learn, because my emotional and intellectual engagement were such that people would open up and trust me. I tried to maintain this style with everybody from receptionists and canteen staff to managers and owners.

The important thing is to be aware of oneøs involvement. According to Coffey (1999), prolonged fieldwork entails the development of rapport and the ethnographic research relationship is more personal than other qualitative research relationships. My own fieldwork experience confirms that it is not just a matter of being polite and courteous. Presenting field relations as good helps to validate the research. õGood ethnographic practice, data collection and analysis rely upon genuine empathy, trust and participationö (Coffey, 1999:47). Even the one-off interviews such as those with owners came out well, because I had first gained the trust of other people, who then expressly or accidentally convinced them that it was worth talking to me, and because during each interview I made a serious effort to engage my heart and mind, discussing important issues at an organizational and personal level, but always showing genuine sympathy,

which in turn encouraged the interviewees to open up and share deep thoughts and feelings.

4.7.2 Being a blind researcher

4.7.2.1 *To see or not to see? To know or not to know?*

My account of the methodological aspects of this research would be incomplete without consideration of the fact that the researcher/ethnographer is blind. One rather obvious methodological question which arises is how a blind person should conduct ethnographic research when a common sense definition of -observationø would presuppose the ability to see events (Wheeler, 2004). A common thread which runs through many discussions of ethnography is the demand placed on ethnographers to be visually aware of their surroundings and observe social interactions as they occur (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Denscombe, 1999; Gonzalez, 2000; King, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The first point to make in response is that research topics and research sites will differ in the ease with which they lend themselves to being researched by a blind ethnographer. For instance, if the focus of my research had been interactions amongst workers on machines in the workshop, where noise levels are high and where capturing verbal exchanges is almost impossible, my access would obviously have been severely impaired, forcing me to rely almost entirely on interviews.

In the event, however, the subject of my investigations was quite accessible to a blind ethnographer, since the events concerned took place in meetings, offices and interviews, where it was possible to be fully immersed in interactions amongst members and where there were no elements of disturbance such as overwhelming noise which could prevent me from hearing participantsø voices clearly. That said, although I agree with Wheeler (2004) that it is possible to argue that the visual does not necessarily provide an accurate

representation of events (a point to which I shall return shortly), I do not agree with his assertion that accounts provided by blind researchers can be considered as valid as any other (Wheeler, 2004). There are instances where sight is necessary and where other senses cannot compensate. Sight is the only sense of the five we have that allows a global view, in other words to perceive and acquire information, and therefore knowledge, synoptically and synchronically. The other four senses, defined in this chapter as residual in a blind person, work in a sequential manner, in other words when a new piece of information is acquired, the perception of the information acquired earlier weakens. To this drawback, blind people try to compensate with memory, which is, however, more volatile than the synoptic perception. Blind people can adjust and compensate, as illustrated later, but in my view it would be wrong to claim that it is just the same as if one could see.

The second consideration, which I phrase in a rather paradoxical way, is how sighted people, including researchers and ethnographers, can act as if they were blind. In other words how, although able to see, they are not able to capture what is meaningful and beyond the scene observed. Wheeler (2004) refers to the õproblemö of a reliance on sight, which can produce an illusion of objective reality and which is not completely ignored in methodology texts. For example, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:92) cite Backer as follows:

> It takes a tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing things that are conventionally ±thereø to be seen. I have talked to a couple of teams of researchers [í] and it is like pulling teeth to get them to see or write anything beyond what ±everyoneøknows.

Here, Backer expresses the difficulties for sighted researchers when visual imagery is unquestioningly accepted as representing objective reality (Wheeler, 2004). The problem Backer identifies is similar to one which has prompted others to suggest that most social anthropologists should consider reducing sight to a secondary status (Manning, 1995:264).

My contention is not only that sighted researchers may not be able to make fruitful use of what they see in terms of understanding, but also that the knowledge provided by the senses other than sight has as much claim to objective reality as that provided by sight. The fact that sighted peopleô including researchersô rely particularly heavily on this sense does not mean that the remaining four are unable to do their job in granting access to the real world. The elevation of other senses is also stressed by Robins (1996), who argues that the dominance of the visual represents a drive to disembodiment and a retreat from experience, as the sense of touch is devalued in favour of the more powerful, intellectual, real, objective, detached visual world. There appears to be a chasm between those who advocate caution when interpreting visual imagery and others who appear to privilege sight, conflating the visual and the observational. For example, Slack (2000:10) argues that õlooking and watching should be embedded in all psyches of all researchersö. Presumably, then, the concept of a blind researcher would be problematic for Slack, whereas for Backer, Manning and Robins, the idea might appear less challenging (Wheeler, 2004). This problematic relationship to the visual has been recognised by Hughes (1999:160-61), who argues against formulations that promote ocularcentric beliefs such as ÷to see is to knowø, where a reliance on the visual creates a myth, a clouding of interpretation, as it would stop interpretation too soon.

It would be far beyond the scope of this chapter and of this doctoral thesis to establish fundamental truths about the epistemology of the five senses; I will therefore limit myself here to my own experience and reflections. For me, the visual certainly does not coincide with the observational; otherwise not only research but life itself would have been for me, as a blind person, excessively frustrating and demotivating, because of the impression that what I perceived was not reliably real, where by reliably real I mean the access to a certain stability and therefore predictability. On the contrary, the knowledge of reality, including social reality, that I am able to gather is dependable, allowing me a proper interaction with individuals and things. Running the risk of sounding immodest, I would add that sometimes the people who know me state that it seems that I am pretending that I do not see, because what I am able to capture and understand of what is around me at times escapes the sighted people near me, who are perhaps distracted and not accustomed to being vigilant with all their senses. This is not to claim that sight can be completely substituted or to deny that sometimes I simply cannot grasp aspects of reality which are only graspable through sight; it simply means that after years and years of being blind one learns to get the most out of it. This leads to a third consideration related to my status as a blind researcher.

Blind people are normally accustomed to putting in place strategies of compensation for the lack of visual information. Thus, while sighted people may tend to rely heavily on sight, using their other senses to a lesser degree, blind people are trained by life to make a more refined use of the so called ̶residual̶ senses such as hearing, touch and smell, or indeed of intuition, of being in a state of alertness. So, for instance, from the voices of the CarparCo people I encountered I could infer their moods; from his or her way of speaking I could infer whether a person was insecure. One also becomes accustomed to

noticing the direction of the interlocutor's voice, allowing me to judge, for example, that an interviewee was looking down, which could be a sign, for example, of unease or embarrassment or disengagement, which in turn might affect what questions I posed next and how. Gestures can also be very meaningful. Interviewing a manager, I realized that he would frantically click his pen when I asked him about his relationships with colleagues. I then learned from my gatekeeper that this particular manager found it difficult to relate in a relaxed manner to colleagues, to the point that the HR department had arranged a series of sessions with a coach to help him handle his aggressiveness. Another interesting source of information comes from paying attention to how people breathe, if they take deep and anxious breaths, if they snort, if they hold their breath whilst speaking. This is more easily acknowledged during interviews where the interaction is sufficiently long and held in an environment without background noise.

The residual senses do not substitute for sight, but they enhance and compensate for it. Of course, it is possible to be mistaken in one's interpretation of a piece of sensorial data, so one should not rush to conclusions; whenever possible, a cross-check should be made using other sources of information such as the content of conversations or by asking specific questions of key informants. This is the kind of triangulation between different sources (also of the senses) that I carried out in order to check the credibility and dependability of what I was experiencing as meaningful in relation to these people. Besides, sighted researchers can surely be aided in their analysis by paying attention to body language, which is almost entirely precluded to blind researchers, although they do, in certain conditions as indicated above, have some limited access to body language. As such, it might be argued that the blind researcher misses valuable information. However, it could also be argued that body language can be learnt by individuals, hence

any interpretations may be deliberately influenced by research subjects (Richardson 1996).

Although traditional conceptions of the research process appear to accept uncritically the idea that visual observation provides accounts which reflect objective reality, it has been shown that it is possible to argue that the visual does not necessarily provide an accurate representation of events (Wheeler, 2004). At the same time, independent of the visual accuracy in representing events, the dependability of the knowledge provided by the other four senses is not, in my view, questionable. Consequently, accounts provided by blind researchers can also be regarded as dependable. A sighted researcher and a blind one might reach the same conclusions by different routes, whereas in other instances, what has been observed might be completely different, precisely because of the different nature of the sense used. What makes a good researcher, blind or not, is his level of preparation for the task and his sensitivity, intellectual and human, and overall if the kind of analysis and findings produced are persuasive and credible and if they add to our knowledge of a specific phenomenon.

4.7.2.2 *Supposed differences, unexpected resources*

‗Good‖ ethnographic research is often done when the researcher minimises any perceived ‗differences‖ between her/himself and the research subjects (Coffey 1999; Denscombe 1999; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995). The purpose of reducing such differences is to engender trust and confidence on the part of research subjects. The identity of the researcher therefore needs to be managed. Strategies for managing identities include dressing appropriately and adopting the local vocabulary in order to reduce the status of researcher and become an ‗insider‖ (Denscombe 1999; Hammersley & Atkinson 1995; Jorgensen, 1985; Mason 1996).

In my case, in order to reduce this difference I had to put in place several different strategies, given that the people I had to interact with ranged from top managers to workers and receptionists. I dressed smartly in outfits which, of course, I could not change depending on whom I was talking to. Instead, one of the strategies which I adopted to reduce distance was to adapt my vocabulary slightly, depending on situations and interlocutors. For instance, when I was with workers I sometimes mirrored their dialectal expressions, which made them feel that I was not so distant from them and that like them, I came from the working class. Conversely, when I was with managers, I tapped more into my experience as a traveller, a person interested in culture, education and so forth.

Furthermore, I tried to reduce the difference and establish a good rapport by seeking commonalities, for instance a passion for athletics, or by discreetly sharing suffering. One of the team members had leukaemia and life for him, both inside and outside work, was quite hard. The fact that I was blind made him perceive that I knew what suffering was, since I had to deal with a severe impairment. This made me close to that team member in a special way without ever being pathetic or too explicit, simply sharing a deep human experience such as that of sorrow and hope.

However, the extent to which blind ethnographic researchers can reduce their distance from their subjects and manage their identity must be considered (Wheeler, 2004). Any mention of a blind researcher in the methodological literature is as a marginal consideration (see, for example, Barnes, 2003; Campbell & Oliver, 1996; Oliver, 1992; Zarb, 1997), while it is absent from most of the canon. Coffey and Denscombe make no reference to how their advice affects researchers other than those who are sensorially and physically able. The ability of a blind researcher to adopt a ‒managed identityø and

to blend unobtrusively into and move around most research settings is severely restricted (Wheeler, 2004).

Whilst I must agree with Wheeler (2004) that in such research, blindness is an integral component of the self which cannot be 'shaken off' in order to adopt a managed identity complete with sight, I would also argue that blindness as a 'difference' can become a resource. My experience in conducting this research is that when well managed, blindness, like other personal characteristics, can be an advantage and a key to open many doors. For instance, when such an impairment is lived in a reasonably relaxed and self-confident manner, it is possible to approach people with spontaneity and to make them feel at ease in the presence of a disability which might otherwise generate embarrassment. When this is combined with a polite, breezy manner and reasonably intelligent conversation where differences but also similarities emerge, I have found that the outcome on the 'abled' side is a pleasant puzzlement and an almost unconscious inclination to trust.

My disability has certainly contributed significantly to moulding my personality, for instance training me in listening not only to environmental sounds but also the sounds coming from people's inner worlds. I did not give up impression management during fieldwork, but made a constant effort towards it, making good use of my past experience, knowledge and skills. While remaining myself, I knew in most cases what little adjustments to make to my behaviour or my voice, or what topics were best suited to engagement with my interlocutors. As mentioned above in relation to finding commonalities with participants, the fact that I had practiced a lot of sport, especially athletics, surely contributed to establishing a rapport with one team member, an experienced triathlete. Once we had discovered this common passion, we would always

spend a little time discussing our athletic enterprises. Over time, this team member became one of my key informants; indeed, several years later, I am still in contact with him. Encountering a blind person who is active and motivated, for some people like this team member, can trigger positive feelings and a disposition to engage openly. I wish to make it clear that I claim no special merit here, since I was very lucky in the way I was brought up and in the gifts that Life has given me. Thus, even moving around the research site was not particularly difficult. Either my gatekeeper would teach me to move around where possible, or I was helped by the people at CarparCo. They were always very kind and available to help if I needed a lift from office to office, from plant to plant, etc. Women were maternal towards me, whilst men wanted to be gallant with a young lady. Actually, rather than constituting a problem, these instances offered me positive opportunities to build rapport, to get to know the people and their work environment better.

In conclusion, for all the reasons listed above, I can assert that I satisfactorily managed to compensate for my lack of sight, reaching a position where I did not need much visual information. I have been able to collect and interpret enough data to draw sensible conclusions and, as argued by Wheeler (2004), we can finally assert that inability to see does not preclude researchers from conducting ethnographic studies.

4.8 Data analysis

4.8.1 Analysing ethnographic data

In my ethnography, as is common in this kind of study (see Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995), the analysis of data was not a distinct stage of the research. In many ways, it began in the pre-fieldwork phase, in the formulation and clarification of the research problems, and continued through to the process of writing reports for the university (for

the upgrade and the completion review that are required stages of the PhD programme) or for CarparCo, and in writing this thesis itself. Formally, it started to take shape in my analytic notes and the memoranda which I produced for my own use or for my supervisors, while informally, it was embodied in my ideas and hunches as an ethnographer. In these ways, to one degree or another, the analysis of data fed into my research design and data collection (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995).

This interactive process permeated my ethnography, which was aimed at providing explanations of the issues favouring the learning of a specific work practice such as cross-functional teaming. Developing these explanations implied a gradual narrowing of focus and a process of abstraction (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995). With regard to the kind of reasoning I followed throughout the analysis stage, and practically throughout the whole research, it had a back-and-forth, iterative character in which concepts, conjectures and data were in a continuous, dynamic and even chaotic interplay (Van Maanen et al., 2007:1146). However, this flexibility in the connections within and between the conceptual and empirical planes represented the road to discovery (Van Maanen et al. 2007:1146). In fact, it was certainly valuable to transcribe the 48 interviews personally, soon after I carried them out. This lengthy exercise proved very fruitful, since it represented a level of analysis where iteration helped me increasingly to spot underlying connections and work on possible interpretations as they emerged.

4.8.2 Narrative analysis

After reflecting upon the kind of data I had gathered and the research questions I had to deal with, I decided that the specific analytical approach that would enable me to make the most of my data was a narratological one. Given that my main research question concerns the influence of identity on the learning of a certain work practice, I needed an

analytical approach which would help me to explore individualsø identity. As aptly argued by Mishler (1986), the respondentøs account is also a form of self-presentation in which the teller is claiming a particular kind of self-identity. Following Czarniawska (2004), we assume that a narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected. With regard to interviews, Mishler (1986:69) states: õTelling stories is far from unusual in everyday conversation and it is apparently no more unusual for interviewees to respond to questions with narratives if they are given some room to speak.ö I soon realized, even during the initial stages of the analysis, that the transcripts produced from both interviews and field notes were indeed like a casket containing precious narratives. Czarniawska (2004) argues that in many cases, answers given in an interview are spontaneously formed into narratives and that such narratives, forming interview responses, do not differ from other narratives. I therefore dealt with field notes as if they were narratives, integrating them with those derived from interview transcripts.

4.8.3 Tackling the bulk of data

A crucial step in analysing my data was a careful reading (indeed several readings) of the corpus of data, in order to become thoroughly familiar with it. At this stage, I used the data as ╢food for thoughtø I looked to see whether I could identify any interesting patterns or recurring themes in workersø and managersø attitudes, histories, behaviours; whether anything stood out as surprising or puzzling; how the data related to what I might have expected on the basis of commonsense knowledge, official accounts or previous theory (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995). For instance, the theme of the relationship between the owners/founders and employees came up in almost every interview or informal exchange, becoming therefore a clear focus of interest for me. I

also paid attention to whether there were any apparent inconsistencies or contradictions among the views of the different groups/teams or individuals, or between people's expressed beliefs or attitudes and their actions.

It proved useful to compare and relate what happened at different places and times, for instance contrasting the time when the founders were present on site to the current situation, where they no longer worked there, in order to identify more or less stable features of people (founders and employees), groups (managers and workers), relationships (founders vs workers; founders vs managers) and so forth. As alluded to above, I had already started noticing some of these features and patterns during fieldwork, while taking notes and transcribing interviews.

At this stage, these concepts were not well-defined elements of an explicit analytical model; rather, they were a loose collection of õsensitizing conceptsö (Blumer, 1954). For instance, the relationships of the founders with their workers and with their managers formed one of these sensitizing concepts that became the buds of my analysis. These sensitizing concepts contrast with what Blumer calls õdefinitive conceptsö, which õrefer precisely to what is common to a class of objects, by the aid of the clear definition of attributes or fixed bench-marksö. A sensitizing concept lacks such specificity and õgives the user a general sense of reference and guidelines in approaching empirical instances. Where definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest. Where definitive concepts provide prescriptions of what to see, sensitizing concepts merely suggest directions along which to lookö (Blumer 1954:7).

By constantly returning to the material I was analyzing, I clarified and developed the categories of the analysis until I had reached a position where I had a stable set of categories, where sensitizing concepts turned into something more like definitive concepts; for instance, the narratives concerning the identity derived from relationships with the owners were labelled 'nurturing father' and 'controlling father', while for the identity derived from local and social context, I had identified as definitive concepts origin in the north-east of Italy and membership of the occupational groups of workers and managers, and of 'ceto sociale' (i.e. social classes not in the Marxist sense but in the more sociological sense of the term). The systematic coding of the data was completed in terms of these categories. The whole coding stage was carried out manually, opening as many Word documents as the categories I was identifying and cutting and pasting narratives to each category or from one to another. This entailed a massive exercise of reading and re-reading which made me familiar, even intimate, with my data.

Having acquired some concrete and analytic categories for organizing the data, the next step I took was to work on those which seem likely to be central to my analysis, with a view to clarifying their meanings and exploring their relations with other categories (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995). The strategy adopted here is what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call the 'constant comparative method'. In this procedure, the analyst examines each item of data coded in terms of a particular category, noting its similarities with and differences from other data that have been similarly categorized. This may lead to vaguely understood categories being differentiated into several more clearly defined ones, as well as to the specification of subcategories. In this way, new categories or subcategories emerge and there may be a considerable amount of

reassignment of data among the categories. For instance, in order to understand to what extent the skilled workersøCFTs had actually learnt the practice of working as a CFT, I developed a number of categories tapping both into the CFT literature, where the components of good CF teaming so far discussedô such as cooperation, knowledge sharing, etcô can be used as analytical categories, and into the data itself, where new evidence of good CF teaming emerged; gradually, through this comparative procedure, I was able to identify the categories and move a few items around. As this process of systematic sifting and comparison developed, so the mutual relationships and internal structures of categories were more clearly displayed (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995). However, the development of analytical ideas rarely takes the purely inductive form implied by Glaser and Strauss (heuristically useful though their approach is). In my analysis, theoretical ideas, common-sense expectations and commonplaces played key roles. For instance, the commonplace of self-centred middle-class member and humble working-class member helped not only in the coding stage but also in the discovery of more profound analytical connections between concepts that I developed, such as regional identity and de-centring. Indeed, it is these that allow the analyst to pick out surprising, interesting and important features in the first place (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995).

Lastly, I strove to make explicit and to examine those assumptions to which strong challenges could be made (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1995). In the case of managers, for instance, their poor level of learning of CF teamwork practice may have been due to the relative inexperience of working on an original piece of equipment. Recognizing this as one of the possible hindrances, I also reflected on the role of other issues I was

gradually identifying as more closely connected with different aspects of identity and finally showed the significant role played by these identity-related issues.

4.8.4 Shortlisting narratives

Next, in this composite analytical process, I had to choose which narratives were worthy of being more closely analysed and then presented in the findings chapters. They were shortlisted either as revealing and exploring a specific theme or as telling an actual story. Besides, the narratives were selected either as being typical of all interviews and meetings observed or as being exceptional and therefore offering an interesting insight. It should be noted that their length varied, depending on how our understanding of the matter at hand would benefit from a more extended provision of data.

4.8.5 Turning narratives into stories

A further stage in the analysis, which also impacted on the presentation of the data, is the transformation of narratives into stories. It is important, in fact, to distinguish between a narrative and a story (White, 1987). A narrative is not a story, because it lacks a plot; it needs to be ‑emplotted∅ In the presentation of the narratives, therefore, I tapped into observational data (field notes) to give context to the narratives, to detail characters and to provide or improve endings so as to turn those narratives into stories. Todorov proposes a definition of a minimal plot as consisting in the passage from one equilibrium to another. It is important to note that a minimal plot is enough to make sense of a narrative (Todorov, 1971; 1977).

4.8.6 Closer and closer…into the text

Taking the narratives elicited during interviews, integrated with those reported in field notes, I interpreted them, concocting from them a new narrative, so to speak

(Czarniawska, 2004). In particular, in reading the narratives, I followed the õhermeneutic triadö formulated by Paul Hernadi (1987), which separates conceptually three ways of reading a text, in practice usually present simultaneously and intertwined. The attraction of his classification lies, among other things, in abolishing the traditional divides between ÷interpretationø and ÷explanationø by pointing out that various modes of reading are possible, and indeed desirable, at the same time (Czarniawska, 2004). The first step of the triad I followed is the simplest one, in other words the rendering or reconstructing of the text in my vocabulary as a reader (÷What does this text say?ø). The second step consisted of various ways of explaining it (÷Why does this text say what it does?ø and ÷How does this text say what it does?ø). In this second step, where I wanted to see how things were said, I deconstructed the text by looking at the choice of words, of tenses, of metaphors and other figures of speech, idioms and dialectal expressions. The third and final step was closer to writing than to reading: ÷What do I, the reader, think of all this?ø This entailed a ÷constructionø which was my interpretation of what I had found in the previous steps. It is worth mentioning here that in chapter 6 I have mobilized a few concepts from psychodynamics that appeared particularly helpful in reaching a deeper understanding of the data concerning the identity derived from relationships with the owners, analysed in that chapter. Psychoanalysis found, in the stories told by its patients, a route into the world of the unconscious almost as valuable as that offered by dreams (Gabriel,1998).

4.8.7 Fieldwork summary

Overall, the ethnography, which lasted roughly 18 months, was non-participative, overt and semi-structured. The data collected are briefly listed below:

❖ 45 meetings (about 80 hours) recorded and attended, comprising:

- 15 pumps team (skilled workers)

- 14 joints team (skilled workers)

- 7 Auto team (managers)

- 4 management committees (managers + owners)

- 5 meetings with CFT leaders (pumps and joints) and managers to write a new procedure benefiting from the experience of the existing teams. This contributed to setting up two new CFTs for disk brake and cylinder production lines.

❖ 48 semi-structured and unstructured interviews (1118 pages of transcripts), comprising:

- 11 second round joints team

- 12 second round pumps team

- 5 managers on CFTs and other topics

- 8 Auto team

- 3 (+ 3 included in the interviews with the managers in the Auto team) ManCo members on the committee itself and other topics

- 4 owners on all the above-mentioned topics and more

- 1 production foreman

- 1 production foreman's former trainee

- 2 on-the-spot interviews with a joints team member working in the technical office

- 1 HR and organization manager (my gatekeeper).

❖ 266 pages of notes on every day of fieldwork, including informal observations and talks, and every phone call with people from CarparCo.

4.8.8 Documentary data

The documentary data comprised some internal documents (monthly production team reports, organizational charts, emails, minutes of meetings).

4.9 Establishing trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) argue that the conventional criteria of validity and reliability are inappropriate for the qualitative, interpretative paradigm, whose focus should be on trustworthiness. The basic issue in relation to trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including him/herself) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? In response, õcredibilityö and õdependabilityö are the interpretivistøs equivalents for the conventional terms õvalidityö and õreliabilityö (Schwandt, 2007). According to Guba and Lincoln (1985), there are three activities increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced: prolonged engagement, persistent observation and triangulation. As established in the sections above, these three activities were carried out in my fieldwork, from prolonged observation over a 18-month time span where interpretations were not predictable from the original formulation (Guba and Lincoln, 1985), to building trust and rapport with people on the research site, to triangulation. In particular, the ways in which credibility has been ensured through the use of methodological triangulationô described as the collection of different forms of information from different people, at different levels, at different times and in different placesô has been discussed by many authors (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983:181; Marshall and Rossman, 1989:146; Mason, 1996:149). Thus, as illustrated above, data were collected through distinct methods such as direct field observations, extended

formal and informal interviews and the review of documents. These sources of data concerned both workers and managers; for the workers I investigated two distinct CFTs, while for managers, I investigated both the Auto team and the management committee. Direct observations occurred repeatedly over a number of meetings, after each of which I was able to ask for clarification. Interviews, where possible, were carried out twice. Credibility was also pursued by cross-checking my non-visual observations with further questions and probing to appropriate informants. Finally, credibility was also attained during data analysis by triangulating different narratives.

As to generalizability, the goal of this study was to offer a õgeneralizingö and not a õparticularizingö analysis (Lipset et al., 1956:419-420). In analytical generalization, the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory (Yin, 2003). CarparCo, like hundreds of firms, was making a continuous effort to increase effectiveness, including by setting up cross-functional teams. The establishment of these new organizational structures implies a learning process, which in CarparCo proved to be successful for skilled workers and largely unsuccessful for managers. The discussion of the data gathered will try to show how specific team membersø identities can significantly hinder or catalyze the learning process. This will possibly add new understanding within the theory of learning in organizations, especially the learning of organizational practices, through a consideration of the role of identity which is practically absent from the existing literature on cross-functional teams.

Another principle underpinning the trustworthiness and credibility of the case study is the maintenance of a chain of evidence. This principle is based on a notion similar to that used in forensic investigations: that of allowing an external observerô in this

situation, the reader of the case studyô to follow the derivation of any evidence, ranging from initial research questions to ultimate case study conclusions (Hartley, 2004). The data produced will therefore be analysed by building an explanation of the case. In most existing case studies, explanation building has occurred in narrative form. Because such narratives cannot be precise, a useful way to approach case studies is that in which the explanations have reflected some new theoretically significant propositions, as I have done here in rethinking the theorization of identity in situated learning theory and cross-functional teams.

4.10 Chapter summary

I started this chapter with some philosophical reflections concerning the sociological paradigm that can best explain this research, interactionism, with the relative ontological and epistemological specifications. Next, I presented the case study as the chosen research design with a justification of the appropriateness of this choice, basically connected with the depth and variety of the data it enables. After briefly describing the early stages of field research, i.e. the pilot study and the gaining of access, I discussed my choice of ethnography as a specific method of enquiry and explained how I carried it out in practice through the techniques of observation, interviewing and documentation. Subsequently, I offered a few thoughts on reflexivity, also in relation to the fact that I am a blind researcher, an aspect which deserved proper consideration. Having completed the discussion of the data collection components of my research, I turned to data analysis. Here, I explained how I treated my ethnographic data, through an increasingly refined sifting process, from identifying analytical categories to the coding of all transcripts, from narrative analysis as a further analytical

approach to hermeneutics as a tool to deconstruct the text and reach a novel construction, i.e. interpretation. Finally, I dealt with credibility and dependability issues.

The next chapter is the first of three chapters of analysis, which addresses the research question as to how learning varied in the different CFTs studied.

Chapter 5

Workers' and managers' learning

5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins the analysis of the data in order to answer the research questions posed at the end of the third chapter. The first research question is: ―How does the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork vary in the different CFTs studied?‖ Drawing on observational data, we first take a broad look at skilled workers' and managers' CFTs, touching upon many of the elements identified by the CFT literature as contributing to establishing whether or not CF teaming has been learnt (section 5.3). Next, drawing on both observational and interview data, section 5.4 assesses the extent to which the skilled workers belonging to the joints and pumps teams had learnt CF teamwork practice. Next, section 5.5 asks the same question with regard to the managers belonging to the Auto team, concluding that whereas the workers showed good evidence of having learnt the practice reasonably well, the managers appeared to struggle with it. The chapter ends with a summary (section 5.6).

5.2 Some preliminary considerations

This chapter begins to answer the research question as to how learning varied in the different CFTs studied, so that the next two chapters can then account for these differences through a consideration of the identity issues encountered in the field. We will deal first with the skilled workers' CFTs (joints and pumps), then with the managers' Auto team, exploring the data for evidence as to whether they had indeed learnt the practice of working cross-functionally.

Two criteria will aid us in establishing whether or not CFT practice was learnt. Firstly, we will compare the data with the existing CFT literature to see what in the data corresponds to those elements that earlier researchers have considered to constitute and characterize CFT practice. It is worth mentioning that although in the data I have identified several instances of what is reported in the literature, I have deemed it appropriate to select for close examination a sufficient number of significant ones. However, before providing this detailed examination, I offer a brief description of most of the other components of CF teaming found in the literature. Secondly, we will deal with the data at two levels: what team members said they had learnt and what we can infer they had learnt from what they said and did. Thus, we will see that the CFTs were õworkingö or not working and we will consider what this means in practical terms. We will note that learning entails, for example, that CFTs introduced or failed to introduce specific activities, in developing the range of pumps or joints, for skilled workers, or in developing the new pump, for managers.

However, it is important to point out that the question of why team learning was, as shortly illustrated, successful for the pumps and joints teams at CarparCo cannot be answered by simply and uncritically attributing this success to the CFT as a sure recipe for success; there is, as we shall see, much more to take into account. Certainly, the organization created favourable circumstances by providing the necessary resources, such as well equipped meeting rooms, management support and clear targets, namely three pumps or three joints per month; but something else emerged from my analysis of the empirical material as significant in establishing the learning of the CFT practice and this will be duly considered in the next two chapters. By the same token, the fact that managers learnt this work practice poorly cannot be entirely explained by the absence of

some of the elements of the recipe mentioned above. Other issues emerged in the field as playing their part in hindering this learning.

5.3 A broad look

The literature discussed in chapter 2 identifies a number of elements that can help us to understand whether or not the CFTs studied had learnt cross-functional teamwork practice. Some of them are examined in depth, considering both observational and interview data, while others, for space reasons, are now illustrated by taking into consideration only what I was able to observe in the field, namely, stage-setting elements (i.e. setting clear goals; empowering team members), resources (financial and human), enablers (i.e. support from senior management; team leaders) and team behaviours (i.e. ownership; mutual respect).

As regards stage-setting elements, which play an antecedent role in the product development process (McDonough, 2000), the setting of clear goals was evident both for workers and managers. The two skilled workersø CFTs were assigned by CarparCo marketing management the clear goal of developing three joints or three pumps per month. For their part, the managers were assigned by the board the goal of designing a new pump for Auto, complying with standards enforced in the automotive industry. Another important stage setter is the empowerment of team members. Members of the skilled workersø teams were empowered by the management to decide on design and manufacturing aspects of their monthly projects and these decisions included expenditure up to 10,000 euros; above this limit, they had to consult the management. Auto team members were empowered by the board. However, within the board there were those who were dubious because they perceived risks in undertaking this project. With regard to resources, in addition to the necessary financial resources, the joints and

pumps teams were provided with equipment, meeting rooms and so forth. When they realised that further resources of any kind would be needed, they would ask the management and would fight for what they needed if the management was late in providing it. As to the Auto team members, they were also provided with the necessary resources, such as well equipped meeting rooms, software and hardware support for conducting FMEA activities and machinery for testing activities or specific treatments, which would, however, require a certain amount of discussion and negotiation with the board due to the considerable size of the expenditure.

A final stage setter considered is human resources. Although the choice of members was not particularly wide, the skilled workersø teams appeared to succeed on the whole in recruiting the right mix of human resources, since after a familiarisation stage, team members managed to work together effectively in a relaxed and stimulating climate. This came out from both interviews and the observation of meetings. I witnessed episodes of friction which were, however, well managed and eventually solved. As to the Auto team, the managers involved were necessarily those who then participated in the teamøs activities. Thus, although it was not an ideal mix of players, it could not be otherwise.

As to enablers, i.e. those who facilitated the development teamsø efforts and had an impact on the stage-setting elements (McDonough, 2000), support from both senior management and team leaders was considered. I observed that the management as a whole was certainly supportive of the two CFTs, whose establishment was welcomed with enthusiasm by most managers and owners. The team leaders, Antonino Corti and Emanuele Pesci, engaged in a participatory style of leadership. Members were given the freedom to explore, discuss and challenge ideas. Each leader would coordinate his team,

helping members to stay focused on objectives and deadlines, but also giving them considerable freedom to conduct product development (McDonough et al., 1991). The two leaders ceded responsibility to team members for making decisions, thus empowering them, rather than taking that responsibility for themselves. Both would seek their teammatesø opinions and advice both on technical matters and when they had to prepare official communications to the management.

As to the enabling role of senior management, who can have a direct effect on performance (Hitt et al., 1996; Thamhain, 1990; Zirger and Madique, 1990), they were supportive in helping the teams to surmount obstacles (for example, Rinaldo Gatti, head of R&D, and Pacifico Rossi, head of marketing, would each sometimes attend meetings to help a team to overcome either technical or planning issues) and in providing encouragement, such as when the president would send emails to team leaders to congratulate them on progress made (Bowen et al., 1994; Hershock et al., 1994; Hitt et al., 1996; Thamhain, 1990; Zirger and Madique, 1990).

In the case of the Auto team, the support of senior management (i.e. enablers) was somewhat mixed, since some of the owners continued to have doubts as to the value of working on this original equipment project, in other words on the content of what the CFT was to achieve. Besides, the team leader, Osvaldo Romagnoli, who had worked for some 15 years on aftermarket products, was not very enthusiastic about changing sector and having to work on an original equipment project. His colleagues, Rinaldo Gatti in particular, suggested on a number of occasions that Osvaldo was not really acting as a leader in the way that he should have done.

As to team behaviours, the third set of factors highlighted by the CFT literature, cooperation is a key issue in section 5.4.2 and commitment in chapter 7, so I consider here ownership and mutual respect in turn. At a meeting of one of the workersø CFTs, Antonino Corti declared that he had to write the monthly report and send it to the president and to marketing. However, the target for that month had not yet been achieved, because the development of one joint was incomplete. In order to finish it, a final team push was necessary. The team agreed that immediately after the meeting, Pierino Buffetti would go to the shop floor to help Ottavio Rubini and Antonino Corti to make a final series of assessments and decisions so as to complete the joint and include it in the report. Team members said õwe are keen that the team makes a good impressionö (ci teniamo che il team faccia bella figura), showing that they had begun to tie their individual identities to that of the team and were willing to make an extra effort to achieve its success. Besides, as confirmed by Boven et al. (1994), the feeling of ownership among team members was also favoured by empowering the team, establishing a climate and setting goals (i.e. stage-setting elements), and by the participative leadership style of the team leaders (McDonough, 2000). Lastly, from my observations in team meetings, team members mostly trusted each otherøs judgment and integrity (i.e. mutual respect), followed colleaguesø suggestions and interacted honestly with each other, thus exhibiting a form of respect for others, as argued by Wellins et al. (1991).

In the case of the Auto team members, it is difficult to talk about ownership, since the team was set up in the autumn of 2007 but started to convene regularly only in the spring of 2009. During the intervening 18 months, team members would meet intermittently and receive sporadic updates on what was being achieved by R&D. This

kind of interaction did not help to develop a sense of ownership towards the project or of trust towards teammates, as it was too sporadic and unstructured. Section 5.5 examines in more detail the difficulties faced by the Auto team, after a detailed consideration of the workersø CFTs.

5.4 Skilled workers' CF teaming

5.4.1 Competence and knowledge gains

The review of the literature presented in the previous chapters has established that one of the essential components of the practice of CF teamwork is the distribution and creation of knowledge (Denison et al., 1996). Clark et al. (2002) posit that functional diversity within the team is an important source of learning by team members and by the organization, because the application of a wide range of different sources and types of knowledge to an organizational project increases learning. Further, dialogue within the CFT helps members to build new knowledge and develop functional redundancy to ease interpretive processes (Clark et al., 2002).

Having learnt cross-functional teamwork, therefore, means that team members should perceive an increase in knowledge and competence gains for themselves and for their teammates, derived from working cross-functionally, especially in relation to knowledge of other functions. This knowledge, however, should be also visible in an increased and improved system of activities which compounds the CFT practice. The narrative presented here is a story taken from the first interview I had with Guido Luraghi (technical office pumps team member), who at the time was 31 years old and had been working at CarparCo for eight years. It tells of how things changed with the advent of the pumps CFT, precisely in relation to the increase in competence favoured

by interacting closely with other functions during team meetings. The story was prompted by a question on how he thought the team was doing.[3]

> 1) *C: How do you think the team is going?*
>
> I: The shape of the whole team has evolved í in a very positive manner I would say, because we had started off with a very í limited and sectorial, territorial mindset on this matter, and as time has passed I have seen an evolution in each sector/function. As for the technical side, Iøve seen í in the case in point the buying office [Elio Torri], gaining much more technical knowledgeí compared with the beginning. Some questions that I was í repeatedly asked about the drawings, now he [Elio Torri] understands them immediately, without asking anything. So, Iøve seení Iøve seen this. Something that Iøm very happy withí is the system of approach that I had with the quality office [Leopoldo Savelli]. There too, we have grown a lot during this í during this time. Not only have the technical office gone a long way to meeting the quality office needs, and therefore í putting information in drawings that we used to not want to do because we thought it was a waste of time, now we also understand the usefulness of this information and therefore now itøs much more natural for us to put it in. And vice versa ó Iøve seen much more í willingness on the quality office side to appreciate what the technical office passes onto them, and they carry out í far more detailed quality checksí than they are supposed to do.

In this story, we can see how in the plot, as suggested by Todorov (1971; 1977), we move from one equilibrium to another. Guido Luraghi signals this change, which

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occurred from meeting to meeting, using the words 'evolution' and 'evolved'. The new equilibrium is perceived as better than the old one, since Guido Luraghi describes the change as welcome, using the words 'it evolved in a positive manner'. The positivity of this change is underlined by his enthusiastic tone of voice throughout the narrative. As to the old equilibrium, we can assume that it was a situation where knowledge of counterpart functions was scarce. Indeed, Guido Luraghi describes the initial situation as 'sectorial, limited and territorial'. Besides, the paucity of reciprocal knowledge amongst functions is observable in what Guido Luraghi tells us about the technical questions which Elio Torri from the buying office, for instance, would repeatedly ask him.

In the new equilibrium, by contrast, the characters in this story have undergone some significant changes. Elio Torri has not only stopped wasting his own and Guido Luraghi's time by bothering him with the same questions about drawings, but now understands the drawings with no hesitation, 'immediately', clearly indicating that knowledge-sharing activities have been taking place and that a good learning of technical knowledge has occurred. Guido Luraghi goes on to describe the new equilibrium in enthusiastic terms, not only by his tone of voice but also in how he expresses his thoughts and feelings: 'I'm very happy…', with regard to the way that he and the quality office team member, Leopoldo Savelli, approached each other and worked together. He uses the expression: 'Something that I'm very happy with… is the system of approach of the quality office'; this rather ungrammatical phrase 'system of approach' communicates the importance of their relationship, as if everything that was built and learnt was founded on the relationship between them.

Consonant with this opening of the narration of the relationship between the two men, Guido Luraghi describes this working relationship as growing progressively, through regular and committed interactions: õWe grew a lot during this timeö. He gives the impression that this growth was the fruit of a constant and gradually increasing exchange of knowledge and mutual understanding which, importantly, led to a new activity. In fact, Guido Luraghi now saw the importance of certain information that the quality office required on drawings. This new understanding entailed a significant change of attitude and practice on the part of the technical office, since, as a new activity, they now put this information on the drawings õspontaneouslyö, without anybody pushing them to do it. Thus, this was a new activity that team members were actually performing, which is representative of learnt cross-functionality. Before the CFT was created, the technical office was reluctant to provide such information, since this was perceived as a waste of time. We see here how the new technical knowledge impacted macroscopically on work practices and activities.

As for the representatives of the quality office, the change is observable in actual collaboration and knowledge-sharing activities, because of their increased willingness to carry out quality checks well beyond what would be expected of them, showing a desire to collaborate and favour colleaguesø work. This story provides evidence that cross-functional teamwork practice has been learnt in relation to competence and knowledge gains, since a number of new activities were now taking place, namely knowledge-sharing activities with the consequent learning of know-how from other functions; putting information on drawings; and collaboration activities.

While only one story is presented here, it should be noted that it is typical, in that the majority of team members reported positively on the two key activities described above,

which illustrate the competence and knowledge gains considered in this section. In other words, team members felt that they had learnt most from working closely with others within the team, indicating that through interaction, knowledge-sharing activities had taken place and that this learning had had an impact on their work, connected with the development of the new product range, in terms of new activities.

This is consistent with the finding of Kettley and Hirsh (2000) that an appropriate mix of expertise in the team, combined with the ability of individual members to share and otherwise impart their knowledge, constitutes a critical success factor in team learning. CF team members showed an appreciation of particular functional or job competencies, as well as of tools and techniques typically used by other specialisms and functions. Team members spoke of becoming familiar with the requirements of othersø working methods, professional standards, regulatory requirements, etc, such as the case reported in this section where the technical office understood the importance of putting certain information on drawings as required by the quality office.

5.4.2 Cooperation

A second activity forming part of CFT practice which can help to assess whether the practice itself has been learnt is cooperation. As reported in chapter 2, cross-functional cooperation is conceptualized as the degree, extent and nature of interpersonal relationships among team members from multiple functional areas, while the need for cross-functional cooperation stems from the complex interdependencies among members of functional groups working together on project teams (Pinto et al., 1993).

The narrative that we are about to consider is a story of cooperation in the joints CFT. Its narrator is Giacomo Precisi, the quality office team member, who at the time of this

interview was 51 years old and had been working at CarparCo for 35 years. He was considered a pillar of CarparCo, because he had been employed there almost since its foundation and had contributed greatly to its growth. In several instances, in both interviews and informal conversations, Giacomo Precisi, together with a few other workers, was described by younger colleagues, managers and owners as one of the õhistorical memoriesö, i.e. as repository of memories, knowledge and know-how, of CarparCo. My interlocutors provided a definition of this term by explaining that Giacomo Precisi was one of those who knew almost everything about the firm and its history, from technical details and changes in organizational strategy to family and factory gossip. We could therefore argue that what Giacomo Precisi narrates has a certain weight from the point of view of the history and culture of the organization. This story is taken from the second interview I had with him, at the end of my fieldwork and nearly two years after the CFTs were formed.

2) *C: What can you tell me about these nearly two years of working in the team?*

I: Well, so, certainly that itøs something that involves you and that pushes you to cooperate, because before, each of us was, letøs say, confined to his own little kitchen garden, without interacting, or we would interact only for í letøs say extraordinary or exceptional reasons, now we really participate, we really feel weøre touching with our own hands what weøre doing... also for new products and many other things. Because many units are involved, such as the technical office, who carry out their own studies etc. It has a method of study that before, letøs say that itøs not that information was confined, but by the time you could have an exchange of information, letøs say, free, it was, it was a bit more restricted. Now though, by God, itøs completely involving.

The first thing to notice is that to my fairly general question as to what he could say about two years of CF teamwork, Giacomo Precisi gave a very specific answer, telling a story of cooperation. This arguably means that for him, cooperation was one of the most significant fruits of working as a CFT. In the story he tells, two scenarios are depicted. The first describes the past, when colleagues from different functions worked in isolation, each "confined to his own little kitchen garden" (confinati nel proprio orticello), either not interacting or doing so only in exceptional circumstances. In order to clarify this scenario, let us focus on the expression "confinati nel proprio orticello". It is interesting to note that used in this way, "orticello", which is the diminutive and hypocoristic form of "orto" (kitchen garden), communicates a sense of something bucolically dainty and pleasant to be in, whereas the passive participle "confined" (confinati) conveys the contrasting idea of a lack of freedom. The verb "confinare" evokes, for example, the act of sending people to prison, where the room for free movement and interaction is obviously severely restricted. Then there is "own", which indicates that each person was allocated an individual piece of land. Thus, if on one hand the word "orticello" tells us that workers might have liked their jobs and the security of a familiar workplace, albeit restricted in scope, they also felt themselves in some way to be lonely prisoners, each in his own limited space. Giacomo Precisi then amplifies this curious expression, explaining that there was no interaction other than in exceptional circumstances, as when, continuing the jail metaphor, prisoners are given special permission to do something together or to go out.

Then, when Giacomo Precisi returns in his narration to the old scenario, having outlined the new one, he says, "it's not that information was confined... but...". This indicates that in reality, at least in part, things did work in that way; in other words, information,

like the workers, in their õorticelliö, did not circulate freely. This very common way of starting a sentence with õitøs not thatí ö indicates that at least in part the speaker is affirming what he appears to deny. Furthermore, the method of study of the technical office would make a free exchange of information with it difficult, as indicated here by the use of õstringatoö (restricted, literally ÷with stringsø), again conveying a feeling of restricted movement.

The second scenario, unlike the first, is set in the present and begins with the advent of the CFT. In this new scenario, Giacomo Precisi underlines the fact that workers indeed participateô õwe really participateöô and that they have the impression of touching with their own hands what they are doing, in relation both to the development of new products, which is the specific and main task of the CFT, and to many other things. I wish to draw attention to the contrast with the previous scenario, where workers may have appeared to be partially satisfied but where each was passively guided to work in his limited sphere on his own part of the process, whereas in the new scenario all were actively taking part in the whole work process. This idea of being active and involved is also communicated by the expression õyou really feel with your own hands what you are doingö. This way of expressing the concept communicates a physical closeness to what team members are doing, a strong interaction with the product and greater control over the entirety of the work process.

The reason for this closeness and involvement is indeed cooperation. Giacomo Precisi describes the feeling of õtouching with our own hands what weøre doing... Because many units are involvedö. Someone working on only one aspect of a product would certainly feel that the product and the process were outside his control. õtouching with our own handsö communicates a feeling not only of participation and involvement but

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also of control, because all functions were involved and cooperated. The more common idiomatic Italian expression is õtoccare con manoö, which is here reinforced by use of the plural õmaniö and the addition of the article õleö. This feels like the full grasping of an object, not a mere glancing contact, offered by a shared participation in this work practice at its different functional stages.

Finally, we should observe that the story opens and ends in the same way. It starts by mentioning how õengagingö the new practice is and closes with the same word. Engagement therefore appears to be an outcome of cooperation; in this story as in the previous one, we observe that this activity compounding CF teamwork has been learnt and that this new learning has had a positive impact on work practices, especially on the development of new products. The CFT practices, initially imposing cooperation, so to speak, ended by generating benefits which then called for more cooperation, contributing in turn to a feeling of greater involvement and further stimulating cooperation. During the fieldwork, I observed many instances of cooperative activities. For example, in one of the joints meetings, Antonino Corti had to decide between tenders for a component. In order to make this decision, he relied on the help of all his teammates, so he brought with him a drawing of the component and showed it to his counterparts from all functions. Each of them offered considerations from their areas of expertise, technical, quality, commercial and manufacturing, and finally helped Antonino Corti to take a decision on which tender was the best one.

In the pumps team, cooperation activities would usually take place as well. In one meeting, for instance, team members continued the discussion, initiated in a previous meeting, of the development of a particular pump which had the peculiar characteristic that one of its parts, the seal, was made of plastic, which can make the manufacturing

more problematic. As team members talked, it became clear that they had already cooperated on the development of this pump before the meeting, carrying out a number of tests. Guido Luraghi, technical office team member, had worked with Leopoldo Savelli from the quality office, with Leonardo Brembilla from manufacturing and so forth. These cooperation activities were essential because of the use of plastic, seals normally being made of cast iron or aluminium

Narratives evidencing the presence of cooperative activities and the appreciation of cooperation amongst team members are numerous in my dataset. The majority of the interviewees indicated that increased cooperation and collaboration were among the novel activities facilitated by joining and participating in a CFT. Team members learnt a cross-functional level of cooperation which was able to affect their work practices positively.

Over the next two chapters, we will see what contributed to preparing the ground for cooperation, as another component activity of cross-functional teamwork.

5.4.3 Impact on knowledge and communication flows

A third element to consider, indicating that these individuals had actually learnt to work as a cross-functional team, is the impact on knowledge and communication flows. The narrative presented below describes changes in knowledge and communication flows in work practices after CFTs were set up. In particular, I consider further evidence of the learning of the joints and pumps CFTs: the impact that they had on those not directly involved in their activities. This evidence also offers a triangulation of the data provided in the narratives included in the dataset but which are not reported here for space reasons, confirming the achievement of more rationalized and efficient knowledge and

communication flows. The story presented in this section emerged from the first interview I had with Simone Guidotti, who was then head of the technical office. The story is very meaningful, since it shows how the impact of the CFTs transcended the team's boundaries and affected, for example, the daily work of the engineer heading the technical office. Simone Guidotti was aged 37 at the time of this interview and had worked at CarparCo for six years.

3) *C: Have the CFTs had an impact on your way of working? If so, what impact have they had?*

I: They've had a pretty marginal impact on my job and…, in the sense that the more trivial issues can often now be resolved directly inside the team, avoiding the situation where odd questions bounce around the firm… and so they prevent odd questions from starting to bounce around the firm … Because in the end, these odd questions only waste people's time and that's it. So the CFTs have had a certain impact on my job, but a limited one.

C: How have your contacts and interactions with the other functions changed since the CFTs were set up? Have they increased, decreased, improved, worsened?

I: My contacts with other functions have decreased, because now I have less need to talk with the other units, precisely because all the issues, including the most trivial ones, are discussed inside the CFT instead of bouncing on me, forcing me to go round looking for bits of information. So these questions are settled within the CFT and they avoid passing through the heads of functions or divisions, etc, who are already busy enough running things. From a certain point

of view, the frequency of my contacts with other functions has decreased. When I phone the other units now, itøs for more important matters, right? For strategic issues, for example, and not the triviality of a single product development, but something more important. Or the phone call is to arrange a meeting to discuss crucial issues. From this point of view, my relationships with other organizational units have changed.

As with other stories presented here, the plot of this one is fairly minimal, but it is replete with interesting details. First of all, we should note that the narrator, although not directly involved in the CFTs, has experienced and recognized the changes occurring since their introduction. This should be regarded as a first sign of an impact relevant to those on the ground. Secondly, although the interviewee tries to downplay the õmarginalö impact that the CFTs have had on his own daily work, the way he describes the specific content of this experience is rather interesting, through two expressive scenes. In the first, the protagonist is hit by odd questions which õbounceö like balls and after hitting him, continue to bounce around other people or organizational structures until somebody, in this case Simone Guidotti himself, finds appropriate answers and so brings to an end the erratic circulation of these odd questions. However, finding the appropriate answer requires the protagonist himself to run around the firm in a way reminiscent of the erratic and inefficient movement of the questions. The knowledge and communication flows depicted in this scene are wasteful in terms of time and energy, redundant in that questions are posed several times and irrational because questions are asked of inappropriate actors.

The second scene, on the other hand, in the epilogue of this little story, presents the solution to the problem. The odd questions eventually find a suitable arena, the CFTs,

where they can be addressed by the right players until they are solved. In this second scene, the knowledge and communication flows are efficient, since questions are addressed only once, rational, since questions are addressed to the right actors within the right context, and effective, since other actors outside the team are now more able to deal with more important issues as appropriate to their organizational roles. We can therefore state that the learning of CF teaming took place and it is observable in how the activities concerning communication and knowledge flows changed, becoming more efficient, rationalised and effective.

As a further consideration, in the narratives presented so far, CarparCo appears, before CFTs were set up as one of the initiatives promoted by the professionalization process, to have been a traditional hierarchical organization, where each functional area worked in isolation on its part of the process, then passed the activity to the next department in a serial decision-making process. These narratives show, consistently with Bishop (1999), that with the advent of cross-functional teams, an array of specialists was brought together to make design and manufacturing decisions jointly and simultaneously. As the story above illustrates, CFTs at CarparCo made use of what Henke et al. (1993:220) describes as a õconcurrent, informed, consensus decision-making model, together with an action-producing process, reducing the overall cycle time by limiting sequential knowledge transfer activities, reducing the likelihood of repetitions, redundancy and wasteful activities, favouring improvements in the flow of communication and increased knowledge at lower levels of the organization, as well as reducing the delays in knowledge transfer incurred when sequential activities are performed by different people or groupsö.

All of this constitutes further clear evidence of the implementation and therefore of the learning of the CFT practice, which, significantly, also entailed a change in work practices for employees outside the team.

5.4.4 Knowledge sharing and performance

As we have seen, the two CFTs played a significant role in binding CarparCo's organizational units together and in providing a superlative medium for competence gains and productivity enhancement. In this section, we will consider a fourth characteristic of CF teamwork, which is the effect of knowledge sharing on team performance. The evidence presented here is very much in line with Mohamed et al. (2004), who argue that for such teams to be successful, members must benefit from participatory behaviour and cross-functional knowledge sharing, where all those who are involved in a project pool their knowledge and skills to contribute to decisions across organizational boundaries, achieving better results in less time.

The story that exemplifies this point is taken partly from observational data and partly from what was narrated in an interview by Ottavio Rubini, the manufacturing office joints team member. We could entitle this story õa way of workingö. It tells of the remarkable positive changes that CarparCo had witnessed in designing and manufacturing new constant-velocity joints, thanks to the advent of CFTs.

As to observational data, it emerged that new knowledge sharing activities were introduced with CFTs which benefitted the quality of the product. For example, in one team meeting, Ottavio Rubini proposed the manufacture of a joint using a certain work cycle which entailed the use of a specific sequence of machines, clearly following his own ideas of how this should be done. His teammates, however, suggested that the joint

should be realised in a quite different manner. After some thought and discussion, Ottavio acknowledged that this suggestion was better than his original proposal and agreed that the pump should be manufactured following his colleagues' advice. In the past, when such knowledge-sharing activity was poor or nonexistent, Ottavio Rubini would have manufactured the joint following his own ideas and therefore missed the opportunity to improve both the product and the work processes. Another example drawn from observational data is that once, all technical drawings had been realised on school exercise paper, without being classified and shared amongst the representatives of the various units involved in range development. Now, drawings were digitally realised by the technical office, where they were codified, classified and then shared with all team members. In what follows, Ottavio Rubini shares his view of the past practice and therefore of the positive impact on performance of the change.

The interview extract that we are about to consider is a narrative taken from the first interview I had with Ottavio Rubini, when he was 50 years of age and had been working at CarparCo for 36 years. Like Giacomo Precisi, he was amongst those workers who were considered pillars and õhistorical memoriesö of CarparCo, having contributed to building the firm and knowing almost everything about it.

4) *C: What do you think about the reasons why CFTs have been set up at CarparCo?*

I: To make an improvement. As to constant-velocity joints, since we didnøt have a technical office handling all new items, well, a joint would arrive and the quality office would do observations of the item, a drawing was made and then I had to follow the preparation of all equipment and carry on the whole thing,

which was not so simple, especially as I also had to run the whole division. Having a team that follows all issues is much better. It relieves the pressure on me and lets me share my thoughts with a number of other people. From many ideas, something good can arise. But from one single person... the product is pretty much always the same. In this way though, the ensuing product is far better, in less time and everything is under control.

Interestingly, this story of knowledge-sharing activities and performance was prompted by my asking the interviewee why he believed CarparCo had established CFTs. The first answer he gives is õto improveö, then he specifies what the improvement consisted of, telling a story concerning the positive effect of knowledge-sharing activities on performance. The narrator describes the new õstyle of workö as õmuch betterö and the old style as fairly casual, saying that a new piece to be realized would arrive, the quality office would take some measurements, a drawing would be made, then he, Ottavio Rubini, would have to prepare all the equipment needed to make that product and would have to oversee the entire work process, in addition to his departmental responsibilities. This description and his tone of voice, serious and anxious, indicate that for Ottavio Rubini the old style of working on the development of the range was heavy and poorly structured. He also admits that under the old system, where he alone was responsible for thinking about the possible manufacturing solutions, the product was õalways the sameö. Ottavio also tells us that this aspect of collaboration at CarparCo was inadequate prior to the CFTs. The new way of working, by contrast, is described as having brought him much relief, using the Italian word õalleggeritoö, which means õmade lighterö, indicating that the weight of the previous situation had been lifted from him. This was possible because it was now the whole team which was accountable for working on new

products. Furthermore, the narrator depicts the opportunity to share ideas amongst colleagues as having given an edge to the quality of the products.

This story of õa new way of workingö shows that the work practice of range development was now able to achieve a better product in less time. New knowledge-sharing activities were introduced and had a positive impact on performance, also through increased creativity. In particular, these activities were now better regulated and controlled, because the different steps were clearer and more clearly and equally distributed, and more orderly, because drawings, once almost casually made on ordinary paper, were now digitally realized and shared amongst team members.

5.4.5 Expanding CFT boundaries

Very interesting within the context of this better way of working are the stories presented in this section, which again are drawn from both observational and interview data. The evidence offered by these stories triangulates that of the previous narrative, largely confirming the success of the joints and pumps CFTs at CarparCo. What I often observed in both teams is that members made use of CFT meetings to address other issues which did not concern range development. In one instance, towards the end of a meeting, when all issues regarding range development had been addressed, the quality office member Leopoldo Savelli asked his teammates to help him solve a problem concerning the unsatisfactory results of tests carried out on a new pump component. Leopoldo Savelli had had to test this component in order to decide whether or not CarparCo could buy it from a particular supplier and use it in a new pump being designed for an Italian motorcycle company. Having brought the artefact with him, he showed it to his colleagues, who then discussed the issue and identified the problem as originating in the way in which the material had been treated and in how the

components had been assembled. They concluded that it was not something that they could easily fix and that it was not therefore worth buying the component from that supplier. This story tells us that the members of the pumps team had realized that the practice of putting together diverse functional expertise was so effective at solving problems that it was worth transferring it to other tasks or issues.

Moving now to interview data, Guido Luraghi here explains what he considers evidence of his team's success.

> 5) *C: Do you think that your teammates are attached to the team? Not only to being a member of it but to the team itself?*
>
> I: Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I've often seen that [Leopoldo] Savelli really counts on the team. Again and again we have met – not as a CFT but to solve problems that he's presented and asked the whole team to work on. This is a clue. We were told that we had to do it, so we met once a month. I think that this was a – test to see if the team was working or not. As long as it's the firm imposing it, you know that you have the monthly meeting. Even if you don't feel like doing it, you do it. When you start to feel less constrained, you say: "I have this problem – Rather than wasting an entire day trying to fix it by myself, I think I'll contact my teammate to see what he thinks about it. So we work as a team and we solve it in a few hours. We now tend to do things this way.

This is a story with a happy ending that crosses borders. The fact that the practice of working cross-functionally can be extended and applied to tasks where it is not explicitly required by senior management is an aspect of CFTs which is of considerable interest but which is rather under-reported in the literature. We could argue that this

story actually has two happy endings. The first is that CFT members learnt how to work cross-functionally for the specific objectives of the development of new pumps, while the second crosses the borders of the official remit of the CFT itself, since team members spontaneously extended this way of working beyond the scope of the CFT. Instead of wasting an entire day of work in trying to solve a problem on their own, team members now opted for tapping into functional counterpartsø know-how to solve it in a few hours. The expression Guido Luraghi uses, õsi lavora a teamö (we work as a team), which is difficult to translate faithfully, indicates that team members have interiorized teamwork as a well-defined modality that can be put in place when the situation requires it. This also tells us that team members became able to understand when the efficient and effective resolution of a certain work issue would require a cross-functional intervention.

For the narrator, this õfinal outcomeö or epilogue represents evidence that the team really works. The story tells us that the members of the pumps team had realized that the practice of putting together diverse functional expertise was so effective at solving problems and efficient at saving time that it was worth transferring it to other tasks or issues. This recalls the final part of Nonakaøs spiral of knowledge, concerning the transformation from explicit to tacit knowledge. According to Nonaka (1991), as new explicit knowledge is shared throughout an organization, other employees begin to internalize it; that is, they use it to broaden, extend and reframe their own tacit knowledge. In this specific case, the explicit knowledge that team members acquiredô on how to work as a cross-functional teamô was internalised and then tacitly extended by the same actors to other tasks and issues. It should also be noted that by working

cross-functionally on more issues, team members tapped into each othersø tacit knowledge, broadening and possibly reframing their own.

Furthermore, an interesting theme emerges here concerning the changed meaning of CF teamwork for those involved. It starts as something that is imposed by the organisation (i.e. the top management) with a clear scope and performance objectives, then goes beyond this to become their way of doing things, something which changes their own practices, extending these modalities and processes (knowledge sharing, asking others their opinions of problems etc) beyond the specific structured meetings. Thus, we should take account not only of the fact that this specific learning occurred, but also that work practices were positively affected by this new learning and by the meaning it assumed for team members.

5.4.6 Team members' independent frames of reference

Chapter 2 discussed reports in the literature of potential barriers to the effectiveness of CF teams. Such barriers are constituted by a divergence of frames of reference (Hitt et al., 1999) and by organizational politics (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992). The story that we are about to examine concerns frames of reference, since, however unusual it may seem, I observed no instance of political barriers during my fieldwork. In other words, I did not observe that the pumps and joints teams became forums to play out conflicts between units arising from competing interests and goals present at individual and functional levels (Hitt et al., 1999).

A frame of reference can be defined as õthe context, viewpoint, or set of presuppositions or of evaluative criteria within which a personøs perception and thinking seem always to occur, and which constrains selectively the course and outcome

of these activitiesö (*Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, 1988). Within the context of a CFT, distinct frames of reference were evident, for example in clashes which arose when members within each particular specialization or functional area had common educational backgrounds and similar work experience. The types of problems faced and the criteria used to evaluate and solve them are often similar for people who share a frame of reference. Authors including Hitt et al. (1999) argue that these individuals have similar cognitive biases, use similar heuristics and are likely to have common work-related tacit knowledge, developed by working in a specific function. The suggestion is that since these frames of reference will differ from those of colleagues in other functional areas, gathering individuals with such differences to work in the same team might cause difficulties in cooperation and communication amongst team members.

The story that we are about to consider shows how such a barrier arose in one of the CFTs observed at CarparCo, namely the joints team, and how this barrier was overcome by the team itself. In order to illustrate this point and its evolution effectively, we will examine a story told by Antonino Corti, the joints team leader, who recounts how he saw the situation between two team members before and after the CFT was established. The main characters are Giacomo Precisi of the quality office and Pierino Buffetti of the technical office. As explained above, Giacomo Precisi, one of CarparCoøs õpillarsö and õhistorical memoriesö, was fairly senior and endowed with a special ability to solve technical problems by tapping into his extensive tacit knowledge, acquired during 35 years of experience at CarparCo, while Pierino Buffetti was younger, at 35 years of age, with 11 yearsø service at CarparCo, and extremely skilful at finding technical solutions by using complicated software. The two men, before taking part in the joints CFT and

during its early stages, often disagreed strongly on how technical problems should be solved.

6) *C: How do you take decisions during CFT meetings?*

I: Yes, well, letøs say that another big problem in this team was Giacomo Precisi and Pierino Buffetti. They are two completely different characters and they have two completely different mindsets. The fact that they were made to sit at the same table and have the same target calmed them down. The fact that thereøs a common target and that the eyes of the entire firm are on this target, so one might say, leaves alsoí leaves a bit aside ó not a contrast, but if one of them always wanted to have the last word on a certain thing, now he lets it go. We manage to get to a solution together. Before, I would pick up the phone: õI had this meeting... itøs all wrong. Tell so and so that í ö. Then, in those instances you would need a mediator. Now, though, with these meetings, you are all there together, we manage to take a side-street, they smooth out a bit. Before the CFT, they would have done it the other way. At least so far, decisions have been taken in a very peaceful manner. Something that, until last year, for example, õShould I do this tranche, or this other one?ö Everyone wanted to have his say. Giacomo Precisi has at least three decades of experience at CarparCo. Pierino Buffetti has a lot less, but he can use really innovative tools, such as CAD and AutoCAD. He doesnøt have the experience, but with these tools he manages to find a solution. Giacomo Precisi would rely on his experience and Pierino Buffetti would rely on the technology. In any case, they should get to the same point. When this point is not í is not the same, thereøs a bit of conflict, but in the end we go on without scuffling too much. Before, each of them would have stubbornly stuck to his

own ideas, even if the colleague's idea was just as good, but now, in these meetings, to cut a long story short, to talk right down to earth, if both ideas are good, we decide together on one of them, and that's that.

The first thing to notice is that my question on how decisions were taken within the team, which was temporally focused on the present state of affairs, prompted in the interviewee a story where the setting up of the CFT represented a watershed event between past and present times.

Antonino Corti's reply to the question of how decision were taken within the CFT defines the process of taking decision as a remarkable issue, concerning Pierino Buffetti and Giacomo Precisi. The narrator then presents the characters and describes them as being very different from one another. The main difference lies in their diametrically opposite ways of thinking: "hanno due teste completamente diverse" (literally, they have two completely different heads). In this Italian expression, "testa" denotes the head anatomically. While the whole expression means that the two persons have different mindsets, it also communicates the impossibility of changing them, in the same way that it would be impossible for two people to physically swap heads. We therefore start to understand where the independent frames of reference lay.

Thus, in the initial "equilibrium" (Todorov, 1971; 1977), Antonino describes what it meant to work in the CFT with these differences in frames of reference. He depicts the working relationship between the two team members as characterized by disagreement concerning technical matters and how these should be handled. He clearly defines where the difference in mindset comes from by repeatedly underlining that Pierino Buffetti would find solutions through sophisticated technology and Giacomo Precisi

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through experience, or in technical terms, through tacit knowledge. Moreover, the narrator tells us not only about the content of their diversity, but also how this diversity was handled by the two men as a function of their attitudes and behaviour. Each would try stubbornly to put forward his own ideas, even when it was clear that those of the other were equally valid.

The contrast is then drawn with the subsequent equilibrium reached with the establishment of the joints CFT, within which the two men found a way to get along and work together without having to resort to stubbornness and quarrels. Antonino Corti's narration suggests that having a common objective, having to sit at the same table and having the gaze of the organization on them may have been factors explaining why they were now able to find compromise and agreement. Antonino tells us that finding compromise and agreement passed through leaving aside contrasts and one's own views, and through smoothing out heated discussions. I would characterise the process described here by Antonino Corti as one of de-centring, by which I essentially mean three things: being able to distance oneself from functional and/or individualistic goals, being able to detach oneself from one's potentially ingrained ways of working (i.e. procedures and approaches to certain work practices) and being able to put aside one's ego and its hunger for self-affirmation. The fact that they reached a point where decisions were õtaken in a very peaceful mannerö, rather than after heated arguments, and where õif both ideas are good, we decide together on one of them, and that's thatö, shows de-centring from a hunger for self-affirmation and from individual and conflicting frames of reference.

Moreover, we could argue that the õcommon objectiveö, identified by Antonino Corti as one of the factors helping the two teammates to calm down, contributed to unifying

membersø efforts and that this, in turn, favoured a first step towards de-centring from the usual functional objectives, from ingrained ways of working. As to the gaze of the entire firm, one should add, in order to further substantiate the observation that õí the eyes of the entire firm are on this targetí ö, that each team had to send regular reports on target achievement to the top management, including the president, Arturo Rossi, who was also one of the owners and brother of the founder and who was held in high regard by team members. The two teams would often receive feedback on these reports directly from the president, showing appreciation for the good job done by the newly formed CFTs and encouraging them to continue in that way. It would appear that members perceived that in the eyes of the organization, especially of its upper echelons, the team was a novel, well defined entity, under public observation and scrutiny. Admittedly, this perception helped the team members to de-centre from their own positions and from any desire for self-affirmation, to act instead in pursuit of common objectives.

As to the existing literature, we should note that Maznevski and Di Stefano (2000) define de-centring as incorporating an understanding of team membersø different perspectives into both how they convey their own views and how they hear those of others. In other words, for these authors de-centring means seeing things from othersø perspectives and acting accordingly when relating to them. Their conceptualization of de-centring differs from mine in not referring to existing emotional and relational space, as will be further explained over the next two chapters, where we will see, at least in part, why these and other team members responded positively to the need, presented by the situation, to de-centre.

Finally, it is important to point out that these independent frames of reference also meant for the narrator and team leader, Antonino Corti, that he had to act as a mediator between Giacomo Precisi and Pierino Buffetti, who would sometimes not even talk to each other to discuss something arising in a meeting and which was considered by one of the two to be wrong. õBefore, I would pick up the phone: ─I had this meeting... itøs all wrong. Tell so and so that í øö What is of interest here is that in this story, the role of õmediatorö in the friction between the two team members, initially played by Antonino Corti, was later filled by the team itself and specifically by the team meetings, which would be the occasion for mediating on different viewpoints on the course of work. For instance, in one of the joints meetings, Giacomo Precisi reported on a problem with a certain supplied component of a joint which would break almost immediately after being put on a car, or, using Giacomoøs words: õIt breaks after two turns of the wheelö. The origin of this problem was unknown, since the component was supplied and therefore produced by another firm. It may have lain in the quality of the material, connected with the inappropriate inclusion of other metals, so Giacomo proposed a drawing and tempering process on all such components.[4] Bernardo Limoni, buying office representative, possibly feeling personally challenged, since it was he who would find suppliers, started trying to defend the supplier to Giacomo, saying that it had been supplying these components for years and that no problems had ever arisen. Giacomo insisted that clients might be unhappy with such a faulty product and that despite the cost, they should forward to the managers a request for the drawing and tempering process, to fix the problem once and for all. The discussion between the two went on with some friction. Other team members then intervened, trying to mediate between them. Pierino Buffetti very calmly acknowledged that this operation might be costly, as

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[4] Drawing and tempering is a heat treatment to remove internal stresses in metal artefacts.

Bernardo underlined, but that it was the wiser choice, since the functionality of products should be given priority. Antonino Corti also intervened, pointing out that a similar instance had already occurred and that a procedure for requesting this process had been forwarded to the management. The team then agreed to do the same for this component. Pierino's and Antonino's interventions had helped to smooth things out between Giacomo and Bernardo, facilitating a decision on the matter everyone was satisfied with.

In conclusion, we should note that while the presence of independent frames of reference could have represented an obstacle to good cross-functional teamwork, it provided instead further evidence of good CF teaming and therefore that this practice had been learnt and enacted at a deep level.

5.4.7 The moral of these stories

On the basis of the data presented and analysed in this section, we can state that both the joints and pumps teams were indeed working as CFTs and that this practice had been learnt to a good extent, as shown both by what they said and by what they did. First, we found in the data sufficient instances of the aspects identified by the existing CFT literature as comprising or favouring effective cross-functionality, such as having clear goals, management support, both human and material resources, ownership, mutual respect, competence and knowledge gains. Secondly, we identified other new factors which proved that this learning had taken place, such as extending cross-functional teamwork to tasks where it was not explicitly required and overcoming conflict caused by independent frames of reference. Thirdly, this learning entailed the introduction of new work activities such as knowledge sharing, including digitalised documents, cooperation, knowledge and communication flows. We also saw that knowledge-

sharing activities had a positive impact on performance, improving both products and work processes. Finally, as further evidence of their learning, performance was seen to be thoroughly satisfactory. Indeed, the teams not only overcame the major backlog of work, but steadily achieved the organizational targets set by the management of developing three water pumps or three joints per month.

The almost unavoidable question is what made this successful learning possible. At this stage, from the narratives presented above, we might assume that the important factor here was the CFT itself, as an organizational structure bringing certain benefits to work processes, to work relationships and to individual workers. However, over the next two chapters, through a comparison with managers' CF teaming, we will show that other more profound issues may also be considered responsible for this successful learning. First, we shall consider how well managers achieved the learning of cross-functional teamwork practice, in order to provide some grounds for such a comparison.

5.5 Managers' CF teaming

This section aims to provide evidence of the extent to which managers had learnt the practice of cross-functional teamwork, focusing on the Auto team. As explained in the introductory chapter, the Auto team members were managers from different functions, whose specific objective was to develop a new pump for Auto. In examining the work of the team, we will start to identify the difficulties faced by these managers in working cross-functionally. The next two chapters will then deal with some of the issues underlying these difficulties.

5.5.1 Sporadic sharing does not make a CFT

The first narrative is taken from the second interview I had with Alvise Ronchi, head of the quality office, a 55-year-old engineer who had worked at CarparCo for 21 years. This interview took place in spring 2009, some 18 months after the members of the Auto team were assigned to it and when they were supposedly working as a team. We will divide the narrative into two passages and examine each in turn. In the first, the interviewee provides a narrative referring to the present situation of the team, then in the second, he gives his interpretation of the reasons leading to this situation.

7) *C: What can you tell me about the Auto team?*

I: Well, in my opinion the Auto team í is still going through a fairly embryonic stage, because í knowledge of the product is being communicated only now to other functions, including mine [Quality Control]. This is possible thanks to activities that have just started, the design and process FMEAs, where, in both cases, the possible product failure modes are examined and where we see what we are doing and what will have to be done to avoid these failure modes. So, through this, í through this multifunctional approach, we are starting to transfer information, the project is starting to take shape. The thing is that at the moment we still have R&D activities going on, where the other functions, at this moment, letøs say havenøt managed to get information in real time about successes and failures happening on specific tests called pre-tests, that R&D are carrying out. These are tests that simulate the functioning of the product, however, letøs call them pre-tests. Why do I call them pre-tests? Because from their results there might be a need to modify the product, and this has already happened. All the knowledge concerning these pre-tests is not very transparent.

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Consequently, in my view, this makes the contribution coming from other functions to the design and process activity less robust or meaningful. If the staff who are working to define the design and the process had, Iøm not saying exactly the same deep knowledge of what has happened during the tests, because in terms of resources itøs not that one can dedicate the same resources that R&D is dedicating to this project. But having some flashes, some outline information at least, where we are briefly updated on the analysis that R&D has carried out on these tests, the other functions would surely be enriched by the positive aspects that were introduced, and by the negative aspects that occurred during these pre-tests, and with this further knowledge, the other functionsø contributions would have been, in my view, more robust and meaningful in realizing these two documents, also required by the client, which are in fact those analysing the possible failure modes.

From this first part of the narrative, where the interviewee repeatedly refers to the paucity of knowledge circulation activities, we understand that knowledge sharing has long been the main problem within the Auto team, to the point that 18 months after its establishment, the team is still at the õembryonicö stage. In fact, although the Auto team had been formally set up at the end of 2007, some 18 months before these interviews took place, it had not begun to convene regularly until the spring of 2009. The term õembryonicö clearly indicates that the team is at an early stage of development and the main cause, in the intervieweeøs view, is the lack of knowledge sharing, especially on the part of the R&D unit, which has failed to inform other counterpart functions about the progress of the project and of the tests carried out on the pump in particular. Something changed with the initiation in spring 2009 of two activities, design FMEA

and process FMEA, whereby potential failure modes were analysed and possible solutions found. As indicated in the introductory chapter, these FMEA activities were introduced because Auto, the car company ordering the pump, required them, to ensure a procedural form of design review to eliminate weakness from the design and from the process, and to have clear documentation of the possible failure modes. However, FMEA did not completely solve the problem, since R&D, notwithstanding they were undertaking numerous tests, still failed to share useful knowledge with the team, with whom R&D had to share at least part of the responsibility for the design.

Alvise Ronchi contends here that if other functions had been informed promptly and transparently of what R&D were doing and of the results of the tests, they could have duly contributed to the design and process FMEA stages of the project. Lacking this knowledge, however, he notes that they were unable to learn from the positive aspects of the current tests and that cooperation and knowledge creation activities were suppressed by their inability to intervene and to make specific contributions. This inevitably impacted on performance and on learning and knowledge sharing in general, since the team could benefit from a discussion neither of the positive achievements nor of the possible ideas (knowledge creation) to fix the negative aspects of that specific test. Here we notice how little interconnection and concerted action there were between functions, to the point that for months, the R&D unit neither informed other functions of its activities nor asked for their cooperation, missing the chance to benefit from teammatesø know-how. As illustrated shortly, Alvise Ronchi, prompted by my question on the matter, gave a layered interpretation, offering a very interesting clue to understanding the difficulties faced by the Auto team.

C: Why do you think this has not been happening? [I mean the transfer of knowledge from R&D to the other functions on the test results]

I: I don't know. I know that Mr Arturo Rossi [CarparCo president and one of the founder's brothers] explicitly instructed the head of R&D to keep us informed. However, maybe because they were very busy, since at the beginning this was a completely new job, I'm aware of how hard it must have been and how much work has been done. So this already represents cross-functional working. We already struggle to work cross-functionally on activities which are not new and where there is no mad rush, so I perfectly understand that somebody working on research is more focused on the product and feels pressured by having to achieve a target. So I suppose it's natural that one might be focused on this aspect. Right? R&D's main concern is to solve what hasn't gone well during the pre-tests. Right? So, communicating the pre-test results seems a waste of time that delays the achievement of the target. It's only that, clearly, probably, the information exchange was limited. Maybe in a week we made contact twice and then for a whole month we wouldn't hear anything from anybody. This is no way to build a team, is it? The team needs to meet regularly. If you don't create a certain amount of structure, I believe that the team's activity will fizzle out. If we meet twice the first week, once the second week, none the third week, it is very likely that the fourth and fifth weeks nobody expects a meeting to take place to update the team.

As mentioned above, this second passage gives this team member's interpretation of the reasons why R&D was so reluctant to share knowledge on the status of the pump. A first level of explanation is very practical. R&D was too busy trying to achieve the

objective of the task to dedicate time and resources to circulating information on the project's progress and to benefit from their colleagues' know-how in solving problems emerging from the tests on the pump. A question logically ensues: why did R&D have so much work and why could it not see the value of sharing its work with the team? The reason for this remarkable amount of work is that producing an original piece of equipment was a fairly new experience for CarparCo, which had hitherto been largely, although not exclusively, focused on aftermarket products. It therefore lacked experience in designing and manufacturing a product from scratch.

This may certainly have been the case, but the explanation provided by Alvise a few lines later seems to be far more decisive: that its members were already struggling to work cross-functionally outside the team. In other words, coordination and collaboration among functions at a managerial level was largely absent. This kind of explanation calls for a consideration of structural issues as well as cultural organisational issues, as illustrated shortly. It should be taken into account, in fact, that at least four of CarparCo's managers, assigned to the Auto team, were also supposed to be working in the operations team, which had never begun to function, while also taking part in ManCo meetings, where managers also struggled to work cross-functionally. It is therefore to be expected that if they had not yet learnt CF teamwork practice within other less pressurised organizational situations, they were not very likely to be able to do so in the context of a new project where they were constituted openly as a CFT. From this and other interviews, it emerges that CarparCo managers had almost never managed to put cross-functionality into practice, despite its being required in many of the tasks that they had to carry out. We will see why this was the case in the next chapter, which will trace the roots of this difficulty in learning CF teamwork.

Besides, the narrator stresses that the teamøs lack of structure, the fact that it failed for months to take the opportunity to gather around the same table, meant that the members denied themselves the necessary conditions to grow as a team and to learn to work cross-functionally. He himself doubts that it is possible for a group of people to become a team without being able to count on a regular programme of meetings. How could they learn the practice of working cross-functionally without taking part in a sustained common endeavour?

The evidence presented so far in this subsection allows the conclusion that the Auto team had made little progress in learning CF teamwork practice and that numerous activities compounding this practice were missing, from the essential sharing and creation of knowledge to communication and cooperation. For example, in one of the Auto team meetings, after Rinaldo Gatti resigned and left CarparCo, the engineer from R&D taking over from him, Mariano Lucetti, appeared shocked to find, when talking to team members, how little and badly informed they were on the actual progress of the pump project. This engineer had never before taken part in team meetings, since it was Rinaldo Gatti who had represented R&D at them. It became apparent that Gatti had acted as a sort of filter between his R&D colleagues and his teammates, so that only the former were truly aware of the progress of the project. This little story further illustrates the paucity of communication, cooperation and knowledge sharing discussed above.

In chapter 6, I shall offer a possible explanation for Rinaldo Gattiøs apparent reluctance to share knowledge concerning his part of the pump project. However, as reported in the little story above, when things became clearer, he had already left CarparCo, making it impossible for me to ask him further questions on this matter.

5.5.2 Cross-functionality: an almost perfect stranger

The second narrative concerning the Auto team comes partly from observational data and partly from my second interview with Rinaldo Gatti, head of R&D and the team member who, as mentioned in the previous narrative, had failed for months to inform his counterparts in other functions of the progress of the project and of test results. Rinaldo Gatti was a 44-year-old engineer who had worked at CarparCo for nine years. His main task in the Auto project was to produce the right ideas for the design and manufacture of the pump and he also had to take part in the design and process activities where failure modes were analysed and solutions found through discussion with the other functions. As mentioned above, these activities did not start until a few months before the conclusion of the project, in other words a few months before the project was due to be handed over to the client, Auto. The first narrative offers a basic portrayal of how the interviewee saw the situation of cross-functionality amongst CarparCoø s managers. The second, taken from observational data, describes in more detail how the lack of cross-functionality manifested itself within the team.

8) *C: What can you tell me about the Auto team?*

I: In these meetings, at least somebody takes a look at drawings, takes a look at tenders, not everybody, though. Many team members stroll through the meetings as if they were not involved. The reason why things do not get to completion on time are always cross-functional reasons. Because I didnø t get the information, becauseí In fact, how come the workersø CFTs are working fine? Because they share operative information. We need the same thing, only at a higher level, but we need the same thing. I donø t know what the head of sales does. I donø t want to know so that I can criticize him. I want to know so I can take it into account in

what I do. Right? We should tell each other once a week or once a month what we are doing. I inform you.

C: In the operations team, would the members be the same as in the Auto team?

I: Yes, only focused on the Auto project. The cross-functional operations team, in my view, should be a team where, for example, the head of sales should tell me: "Look, I have to take out a certain provider, and I'm putting in another one". I must know about it! He does it and says nothing. I find out about it – just to take a very concrete example – right? He can legitimately do it, but if he told me I could take it into consideration when I'm working. Or I might say: "I'm about to launch a certain project and I will need certain information or collaboration". Or the head of the quality office might say: "I want to buy a certain machine to improve the quality control of certain characteristics". I have to know about this for the drawings. But I don't know. Or maybe I do find out, but through fourth-hand distorted information, spending hours and hours trying to collect it – it's absurd, so contorted – It's no surprise that we're late for so many things and we all end up being annoyed and irritated. These are despicable attitudes where we say things like "I don't know this, because the head of sales knows it." "I don't know that because the head of manufacturing knows." In reality, everybody knows everything, but you mustn't say so, because it's someone else's responsibility. In reality, what we know is distorted by gossip. This is appalling. I can't work without knowing who my provider is, without knowing which machine the head of manufacturing is working on or without knowing if the quality of something can be controlled or not. I need to know what other people know – it's essential for my job. What can I do if nobody

informs me? I try to find these things out and I spend a lot of time collecting pieces of information which I should have already.

Overall, this first narrative confirms, in a triangulating fashion, what emerged from the previous one, in other words that the managers had learnt the cross-functional teamwork practice to a very small extent and that this was generalized to other circumstances where they were supposed to work cross-functionally, such as the cross-functional operations team. More particularly, the narrative opens with a peculiar expression: õat least somebody takes a look at drawings, takes a look at tendersí many... stroll through as if they were not involvedí ö. From these words, we may assume that the team would run the risk of not even having drawings and tenders taken into consideration if somebody were not there seriously participating in the teamøs activities, since almost everybody else is depicted as uninterested. õPasseggianoö (they stroll) calls to mind people on a Saturday afternoon strolling through a town centre looking at shop windows and therefore not paying attention to something potentially important going on nearby.

The narrator immediately links this attitude to a lack of cross-functionality among CarparCo managers. Tasks are not accomplished because of their cross-functional nature. Very interestingly, he then acknowledges that the workers have for their part successfully operated the CFT system, because they are able and willing to share knowledge and information, admitting that this is something that managers also need to do.

As a way of exemplifying what he has just recounted, the narrator then refers to the cross-functional operations team, helping to improve our understanding of the dynamics among CarparCo managers. The notable facts about this team which emerged from

other interviews and informal conversations are that it was a cross-functional team, that it comprised the same core members as the Auto team plus the CarparCo president and that it never really started to function. With a certain amount of emphasis in his tone of voice, Rinaldo Gatti complains that his colleagues have failed to inform him of decisions that might affect his own job and cooperation amongst managers. For instance, Tiziano Acquistapace, head of sales, did not inform him of new providers, while Alvise Ronchi, head of the quality office, did not share his intention to buy a new machine, making the task of the head of R&D to collect all the necessary information very complicated and time consuming. The interviewee then refers to the negative impact on performance, indicating his annoyance by his tone of voice and describing CarparCoøs managers as eventually able to achieve their targets, but belatedly, leaving them annoyed and irritated.

Rinaldo continues to express himself in fairly strong terms, describing the managersø attitudes as õdespicableö, as he recounts an important aspect of their failure to communicate with one another: they would deny knowledge of certain facts, claiming that it was somebody elseøs area of expertise, while in reality everybody knew everything but no one was prepared to take responsibility for what they knew and did. This curious situation, where managers would be reluctant to share knowledge due to their unwillingness to take responsibility, calls for an explanation; in the next chapter, we shall examine some potential explanations for this state of affairs.

Still speaking emphatically, the interviewee states that in order to do his job properly, he needs to communicate continuously with all other functions. In other words, his job required ongoing cross-functional teamwork, which did not happen, however. This resonates with the argument of McDonough (2000) that due to widespread participation

in decision making, it is essential that all members have at hand the information required to understand the operational, tactical and strategic directions of the organization. What happened instead is that this lack of communication, cooperation and knowledge sharing had negative effects, forcing Rinaldo to expend time and energy gathering the information he needed and then to make do with distorted information or even õgossipö. We see here how, in contrast to the case of the workers, communication flows had not been rationalised and improved by the practice of the CFT. Moreover, the lack of knowledge-sharing activities impacted negatively on performance, whereas the workersø CFTs had led to improved performance, thanks to the knowledge-sharing/ creation activities stimulated by and within the joints and pumps teams.

Thus, this second engineerøs contribution confirms that of the first, in suggesting that the reasons why the Auto team had learnt so little of CF work practice and enacted it so poorly lay in an already existing situation where managers seemed to struggle with cross-functionality. Certainly, it is relevant that working on an original equipment project was a fairly new experience for them and for the company, which may have caused a number of practical and strategic difficulties, together with incomplete senior management support and an apparently non-ideal team leader. However, the extent of their failure to learn this practice is not completely justified by such a contingent explanation and, as we have seen, the managers themselves offered a situated interpretation of what was going on, pointing to the inability of the managers to work cross-functionally as one of the reasons. As Kettley and Hirsh (2000) contend, there is a performance expectation which is one of the constituting features of a CFT. It could be argued, indeed, that CarparCo managers should have had the skills and competences to carry out the tasks required of them, as workers were expected to be able to work in

CFTs and achieve assigned targets. It is the aim of the next two chapters to understand why this was the case and to provide a plausible explanation.

We now close this section with some observations from the field and a few quotations from the second passage, not reported here, of Rinaldo Gatti's narrative. This will provide us with a closer look at the dynamics occurring within the Auto team, confirming what has emerged so far about the poor learning of the cross-functional teamwork practice and about the existence of hindrances to it. Observing one of these meetings, one would soon realise that two people were always pressing and active, namely Rinaldo Gatti of R&D and Tiziano Acquistapace of the buying office, who never kept quiet. Thus, the dynamics were always focused on the analysis carried out by these two people. Other team members, namely Alvise Ronchi of the quality office and Teresio Maestri of manufacturing, were more passive. Alvise Ronchi's contributions could be described as effective, although closely focused on quality control. Besides, he would need to be put under pressure, or, using Rinaldo Gatti's words, õto be corneredö, by teammates before he would say: õWell, I will do this. This task is mineö. This peripheral participation in the CFT practice could also be observed with regard to Teresio Maestri, who was also very passive and who could be described as tending to remain silent throughout the meetings, or, again using Rinaldo Gatti's words: õWell, í heí usually plays dumb. Somebody like the head of manufacturing struggles a lot to come through in a team.ö

From this brief narration of the team interactions, the head of the quality office emerges as able to provide effective suggestions, but also as needing õto be corneredö into taking charge of a task. This metaphor, õessere messo alle cordeö communicates something powerful and meaningful, that Alvise Ronchi had to be almost forced into a corner, like

a boxer in a ring, so that he would have no other choice than to take responsibility for a task. Teresio Maestri, the other passive member of the team, is depicted by Rinaldo Gatti with a strong Italian expression õfa scena mutaö (play dumb), which is used when a student, questioned by the teacher in class, says nothing. This expression conjures up the difficult situation where somebody is expected to say something and to make a contribution, and where a prolonged silence generates embarrassment both in the silent individual and in others present. I perfectly remember having felt embarrassed and rather puzzled by Teresioøs prolonged silences during team meetings. Completing the picture of a fairly passive character, Rinaldo Gatti does not hesitate to portray Teresio Maestri as somebody who õstruggles a lot to come through in a teamö. The literal translation would be õhe really struggles to emergeö, which conveys an oppressive feeling of somebody overwhelmed by something heavy, rendering him almost unable to move and to be active. What then was it that prevented Teresio Maestri from participating fully in this work practice? Why did Alvise Ronchi need to be cornered by a colleague before taking charge of a task? In the next chapter, we shall provide answers to these questions, explaining, at least in part, the origin of these issues which contributed to making cross-functionality so difficult.

5.6 Chapter summary

This first chapter of analysis has offered an answer to the first research question, on the extent to which CF teamwork practice had been learnt by the teams observed during my fieldwork. As to workers, we analysed a number of stories, drawing on both interview and observational data, concerning some of the elements identified by the CFT literature as necessary for good CF teaming, and some of the activities constituting this work practice that might reveal whether or not it had been learnt. We observed the setting of

clear goals, the empowerment of team members and the adequate provision of resources, both human and material, (i.e. stage-setting elements); the positive role of team leaders (i.e. enablers); ownership and mutual respect amongst team members (i.e. team behaviours). We also considered competence and knowledge gains activities, cooperation activities, communication and knowledge flows, the impact of knowledge-sharing activities on performance, and independent frames of reference. The evidence presented led to the conclusion that these workers had learnt CF teamwork practice to a really good extent. We also found something not reported in the existing CFT literature, namely that the practice of working as a CFT might be spontaneously extended by team members to other organizational tasks where it was not explicitly required, and that the CFT itself can fruitfully overcome the conflict caused by independent frames of reference.

Turning to the managers, we examined a few rich narratives taken from interviews with members of the Auto team and from observational data, providing evidence of poor learning of CF teamwork practice. Several of the elements indicated by the CFT literature were missing or problematic, such as lack of choice of human resource (i.e. setting stage elements); divided senior management support (i.e. enablers); scarce ownership of the Auto project and little trust in teammates (i.e. team behaviours). Besides, numerous activities constituting this practice were missing, from the essential sharing and creation of knowledge to communication and cooperation. An initial consideration of the reasons for this poor learning lay not only in contingent issues such as the relative novelty of the task, but also in an already existing situation where managers seemed to struggle with cross-functionality. As anticipated, the next two chapters will be dedicated to accounting for these different learning outcomes.

Chapter 6

Identity, relationships and learning

6.1 Introduction

This second chapter of data analysis seeks to explain the empirically established difference (see previous chapter) in learning outcomes between skilled workers and managers by addressing the other two research questions: What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied? How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated? Section 6.3 considers the workers' case, showing through a number of narratives how the relationship with CarparCo's owners had affected workers' identity in a way that made it possible for them to learn and to enact CFT work practices. By contrast, section 6.4 notes how the relationship with the same owners affected managers' identity so as to inhibit learning and hinder their enactment of these practices. The chapter ends with a summary (section 6.5).

6.2 What identity from relationships with leaders?

During the fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis, it emerged that workers' identities were significantly influenced in the learning of a work practice such as cross-functional teamwork by their relationships with the leaders, who represent significant others in this case. This chapter aims to present, discuss and explain this finding. Significant others are defined as those persons who are of sufficient importance in an individual's life to affect his or her emotions, behaviour and sense of self, including relatives such as family members and close friends or mentors. Through interactions

with significant others and perceptions of their responses to his or her behaviour, an individual gains a sense of who he or she is and comes to understand how to act in a given context and role (Ritzer, 2007). Two elements led me to identify Mario Rossi and his brothers as significant others for workers and managers: I was impressed by how often CarparCo workers and managers talked of and referred to them during the work activities I observed, but also when employees were making sense of their work during the interviews I conducted with them. In particular, the significant others identified are Mario and Fabio Rossi, who founded CarparCo with other members of their family.

The two Rossi brothers worked at CarparCo all their lives. When they left the firm they were both in their 60s, having started CarparCo as a small workshop in 1962 after leaving school at the age of ten and thus not having a secondary level of education. Mario was the actual founder of CarparCo and later assumed the role of president. He was described by everybody I talked to in the company as charismatic, technically very skilful and having an incredible sense of business. Fabio, who was the head of the plant where joints were manufactured, was also described as extremely able in technical matters and a good leader.

This chapter provides details of the relationships of workers and managers with this family and of the personalities of these individuals as they are described in the narratives of the employees. These relationships were strong, in fact, and their ongoing influence was evident in workersø and managersø identities. This section begins by considering the relationships of the workers with Mario and Fabio, whilst the next is mainly concerned with the relationship of the managers with Mario.

Amongst the numerous narratives collected, I have chosen those which are typical and/or have something extraordinary to say about the role of relations with significant others in shaping one's identity in a way that makes it easier or more difficult to work cross-functionally. The aim of focusing on a few team members is therefore to achieve more depth in appreciating the rich texture and the important implications of these relationships. As in the previous chapter and the next, I have chosen to include the original narratives in Italian in the Appendix, in order to help those readers who know Italian to get a more accurate feel of what was said and how.

6.3 A matter of relationships

6.3.1 A pat on the back: a boosting fantasy

Let us begin with three narratives through which we shall understand the meaning, origin and influence of "the pat on the back" for Antonino Corti, the joints team leader, who worked in the programming office. The first two narratives are taken from the first interview I had with him, which took place at the beginning of my ethnography, in other words, six or seven months after the two CFTs had been set up. At the time of this interview, Antonino Corti was 36 years old and had worked at CarparCo since he was 18, i.e. for 18 years. In this first narrative, I will show the psychological and emotional importance for Antonino Corti's identity of the verbal acknowledgement of the team's performance by another of the Rossi brothers, Arturo, president of CarparCo.

> 9) *C: What can you tell me about these first six or seven months of work in the joints cross-functional team?*

I: Yes, it hasn't been long, but some results have started to come in, some results have started to come in. Also, the president has complimented us, which doesn't often happen.

C: Really?

I: Sure. At least that is something that gives satisfaction. Now, when you do the report at the end of the month [on achieving the CFT's targets], after we'd sent one, sent two, three, at the third one he [the president] sent congratulations [by email]: "I see that work is going well, well done. Let's keep it up". I haven't taken anything home [i.e. I haven't gained anything tangible], but the satisfaction is there. And if one is keen on [*ci tiene*] these things…

C: Like Pierino Buffetti and Giacomo Precisi [The technical office team member and the quality office team member; a little earlier in the interview, we had discussed these colleagues with regard to similar issues].

I: Exactly, or myself maybe even more than them. Because, in any case, I've always liked to get a pat on the back. These things give you satisfaction.

The first thing to notice is that in replying to my question on what he could tell me about the joints CFT for the time it had been working, Antonino Corti recounted that some results had already started to come in, immediately adding that these outcomes received a form of reward or acknowledgement from the president: "Also, the president complimented us, which doesn't often happen". The fact that Antonino Corti mentioned his team's outcomes, then immediately referred to the acknowledgement from the president, is a first sign of the importance for him of that acknowledgement. His use of "also" is significant too: it suggests that there was something exceptional about the

president taking the trouble to congratulate the team on its achievements. This is reinforced by the phrase õwhich doesnøt often happenö, conveying a sense of privilege and exceptionality: not everybody could expect to be praised by the president in person. From this little sequence we also see how Antonino, perceiving the exceptionality of this event and the privilege of being one of the few recipients of such praise, also in a way recognized and showed appreciation for the role and for the person of the president.

What follows, õAt least that is something that gives satisfactionö, confirms the importance for Antonino Corti of this acknowledgement, since it represents a source of gratification. He then further specified how important these acknowledgements were for him by saying õI havenøt taken anything home but the satisfaction is thereö. By õI havenøt taken anything homeö he meant that he had gained nothing tangible, such as monetary or material benefits, but felt that this compliment was nevertheless very welcome and satisfying, especially for anyone who appreciated such things. In fact, his words make it clear that this was indeed the case: õif one is keen on these thingsö, making us think that he himself was such a person.

My comment õLike Pierino Buffetti and Giacomo Precisiö, whose desire for reward we had discussed a little earlier in the interview, in some way prompted him to go further when he admitted that he might be even more appreciative of acknowledgement and praise than his teammates. He also explained that this was so because he had always enjoyed a õpat on the backö. My contention is that in this kind of intangible reward, Antonino perceived something capable of nourishing and encouraging him. We know from management studies concerning motivation that rewards can be intangible; what we are adding here is an exploration of how such intangible rewards are constituted and where they are derived from. Indeed, Corti stated that he had õalwaysö appreciated a

õpat on the backö. The choice of these words is explained by what he said immediately afterwards in reference to his relationship with Fabio Rossi, the founderøs brother.

10) I: Nowí One of the owners is no longer with us in the office, because since he had a stroke, he only comes in the afternoons. He really struggles to speak.

C: Who's that?

I: Fabio. He was in the office with me. Itøs him who brought me up, itøs him who wanted me, he slowly and gradually taught me everything I know. So, the fact that he would say õwell doneö ...and he really would put his hand on your shoulder... having him there in the office with you, it was gratifying. So I grew up with these little satisfactions. And even now, the fact that they [other members of the Rossi family] too realize [what we do at work], itøs pleasing.

This second narrative is the part of the story explaining the origin of õthe pat on the backö, in other words, how it was constituted and why it was so important to Antonino Corti. He introduced a new character into the story, not by giving his name or his organizational role, but simply by describing him as one of the owners and stating that he was no longer in the office with him, as if to the narrator what mattered most about this person was his absence from the office where he himself worked. This consideration, together with the narratorøs sad tone of voice, led me to think that he was nostalgic for this presence. Besides, in adding the reason why this person was no longer in the office (a stroke) and sympathetically underlining how he was still affected by this dramatic event, õhe really struggles to speakö, Antonino showed a certain emotional involvement and human consideration towards this person. In what follows, we

understand the reason for this sympathy, since Antonino indicated who this person was and more specifically who he was to him.

When I asked Antonino who this person was, he at once revealed his name, Fabio, and all he meant to him, in a sort of emotional release. Let us examine in turn each clause of this sequence. "He was in the office with me..." (Lui era in ufficio con me...): in Italian, this way of making explicit the subject of the verb "lui" (he) and complement "con me" (with me) is grammatically redundant and it shows a clear effort to stress the importance of the identity of these persons in what has been recounted, communicating that it was indeed Fabio and not somebody else in the office with Antonino, and that it mattered that it was Fabio. It is also significant that Antonino says "with me" and not "with us", as if there was nobody else in the office Fabio would relate to, whilst I know that there were other employees. This suggests how Antonino felt this relationship as special to him, perceiving the bond as somehow exclusive to him.

The subsequent clause, "It's him who brought me up" bears close scrutiny. First, "it's him who..." stresses the importance for Antonino that it was Fabio and nobody else who "brought him up". The expression: "who brought me up" usually denotes what parents do with their children: to bring up. A more literal translation would be: "it's him that brought me up to me". The final "a me" (to me), ungrammatical in standard Italian and belonging to the speaker's dialect, reinforces the idea that the action of bringing up was indeed addressed to Antonino Corti himself and that he felt very happy, proud and nourished by being the target of that attention and of that caring relation. Antonino Corti also said "it's him who wanted me", meaning that it was indeed Fabio who had appointed him to his position at CarparCo. However, this expression also recalls when a woman expresses her desire or intention to have a child, "I want a child/baby". In this

case, it was Fabio who wanted Antonino and gave him professional life in CarparCo, so to speak. So far, we can see how the language used in these expressions reminds us of a filial bond, as the words chosen by Antonino (brought me up, wanted me) are usually adopted by a child to talk about his parents.

Moreover, not only had Fabio wanted Antonino Corti and brought him up, but he had also slowly and gradually taught him everything that he now knew. It is important to comment on the way Antonino Corti described how Fabio taught him everything, õpian pianinoö. õPianoö means slowly and gradually, suggesting that Fabio took all the necessary time and care to teach everything he knew to Antonino Corti , who, for his part, sounded well aware of and pleased with this mentoring. Alongside õpian(o)ö Antonino Corti also used the word õpianinoö, reinforcing the slow and gradual sense of õpianö while also giving a sense of tenderness and childlikeness, since õpianinoö is a diminutive and hypocoristic adverbial form. In Italian, one would use õpianinoö when talking to a little child or in order to sound extremely gentle. It is therefore telling that Antonino Corti used these words in his narration, as if conceiving of himself, describing himself and positioning himself in the role of a loved child, with Fabio in the role of a loving parent. What begins to emerge here is the importance played by the emotional and relational embedded context where Antonino and many of his colleagues had been working for years. This context, made of emotionally meaningful relationships, shaped identities in specific ways and allowed a certain learning system to emerge where practice developed through participation in social interactions.

Within this emotional and relational embedded context, we can also observe that what has been discussed so far amounts to what the management studies define as paternalistic leadership. Paternalism means to act like a father or to treat another person

like a child (Erben, 2008). Amongst the characteristic traits of paternalistic leadership the literature reports authority/authoritarianism and fatherly benevolence (Farh and Cheng, 2000:101). From the analysis conducted so far, there strongly emerges the benevolent fatherly aspect of Fabio's paternalistic leadership, characterised by individualised care and individualised understanding (Erben, 2008). Fabio can therefore be described as a significant other for Antonino, since he was important enough in his life to influence his emotions and his sense of self at work, teaching him what to do and how. Phrasing it in Freudian terms, Fabio can also be described as a father substitute (Freud, 1921), and we shall shortly see the relevance of this remark.

It is after describing the educative relationship with Fabio that Antonino mentions the "pat on the back": "So, the fact that he would say ‒well done'…and he really would put his hand on your shoulder... having him there in the office with you, it was gratifying". From Antonino's narration, we can see that the learning process was accompanied by continuous and emotionally charged positive reinforcement. In other words, a specific learning system emerged from this emotional and relational embedded context which was able to sustain the learning of work practices. the verbal praise "bravo" and the kind gesture of "a hand on the shoulder", which seems to have made this learning experience pleasurable: "it was gratifying". The fact that Fabio would really put a hand on Antonino's shoulder and would verbally praise him constituted a constant form of gratification and an event able to shape the embedded context as an emotionally and relationally meaningful one. We can assume that this gratification was constant by the verbal tense Antonino Corti used, which indicates a continuous action in the past. It is therefore something to which Antonino Corti had become accustomed and which he very likely still expected to receive. Then, by adding that he "grew up" with these little

satisfactions, he confirmed that this positive reinforcement was continuous and that the relationship reminded him of a filial bond, since his choice of verb was again that of a child on the developmental path towards adulthoodô in this case, mainly his professional adulthood. Considering that he was now 36 and had started working for CarparCo at 18, we could argue that his professional and personal identity are likely to have been strongly informed by this long and meaningful association, especially in consideration of his youth at the outset. We can also argue that indeed this was the embedded and situated context which contributed to shape Antoninoøs identity through prolonged interactions with the owner as significant other.

Furthermore, from the fact that Fabio had taught Antonino Corti everything that was necessary for him to do his job and from how Fabio did it, we can assume that Fabio shared both implicit and explicit knowledge in an intimate, daily, caring relationship. It is noteworthy that during fieldwork I observed Antonino Corti engaging in knowledge-sharing activities and gladly learning from his teammates during CFT meetings. Besides, during my fieldwork, a new employee was hired who had to cover the same role as Antonino, but on another production line, namely brake discs. Antonino taught his skills as a manufacturing programmer to this newcomer, spending time with him interacting, teaching him how to carry out the most obvious activities (i.e. explicit knowledge) but also the õtricksö needed to be efficient (i.e. tacit knowledge) and through this social interaction the newcomer learnt from Antonino how to be scrupulous (i.e. identity construction). This sort of apprenticeship also included cross-functionality at a certain point towards the end of my study, when two new CFTs were created for as many production lines, including brake discs. Antonino helped other colleagues, in both formal meetings and informal situations, to learn to work cross-functionally. If, as noted

in the literature review, we consider that learning is social and that people learn by doing, by being with others and by imitating them, we see here that this emotional and relational embedded context and the role of the relationship with the leader in it allowed a specific learning system to emerge, where Antonino reproduced with others what he had seen Fabio doing. Fabio's teaching/training, perceived by Antonino as loving, taught this worker in turn to share knowledge, an essential activity of CF teaming, and to help newcomers to become skilled members of that community of practice.

Many CFT members recounted not only that they had happily shared and gained new knowledge, but also that they had patiently taught the job to newcomers, imitating what others had done with them. In several instances, this meant a remarkable increase in the workload and in time spent at work. But they all claimed to have done it gladly and without regret, and nothing in the discussions I had with them, in the overall analysis of the interviews or in the observations, contradicted this assertion. These considerations may also answer some of the questions posed in the previous chapter, as to why members of the pumps and joints teams were willing to share what they knew and to learn from teammates. Their identity, especially that developed in the relationship with one of the owners, contributed to making these individuals well disposed towards knowledge sharing and learning. In other words, having identified with someone who patiently taught them what was necessary to carry out their job, having been in this relationship for years where they engaged in work practice through social interaction, where they were given time, attention and teaching, where they would be exposed to a specific meaning of work, would lead them to construct their identity as somebody who gladly shared their knowledge, spent time with newcomers and helped colleagues to learn new work practices.

This second narrative ended with Antonino Corti expressing his satisfaction that the ownersø family still recognised their employeesø positive achievements, in this case in relation to the CFT. õAnd even now, the fact that they [other members of the Rossi family] too realize [what we do at work], itøs pleasing.ö It is significant that Antonino said this immediately after recounting that he had grown up with those õlittle satisfactionsö of being praised and of feeling Fabioøs hand on his shoulder. It appears that for Antonino, todayøs acknowledgements served as some kind of substitute for what he had always been accustomed to and still longed for.

The next narrative closes this story of Antonino Corti and the pat on the back, not only underlining the motivating importance, established above, of rewards in the form of positive feedback, but also capturing how rewards are constituted, in this case in profound emotional and relational dynamics, and why they can have such a strong motivational power. In this narrative, taken from the second round of interviews, 16 months after the first, Antonino Corti offers an example of how much he sought and longed for praise and rewards.

> 11) I: Itøs a bit silly, but you care about what you do, about the company. I mean, at the end of the month when, just to give you an example which has nothing to do with this, I mean, Ivo Numerini [the budget controller] keeps a huge amount of, of indexes. Indexes here, indexes there. And one of these is the punctuality index.[5] Punctuality index which until last year we had an organizational

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[5] The punctuality index referred to by Antonino Corti was an on-time delivery index concerning the joints line of products, measuring the delay between when the delivery was due according to the order and when it was actually carried out. Before the new IT system was implemented and before Antonino Cortiøs request arrived, this index would not take into account the time between the arrival of the goods at the warehouse and when a bill was produced on delivery. Now, however, when an order had been fulfilled, from manufacturing to packaging, it was sent to the warehouse and a confirmation was released, indicating that the goods were ready to be delivered to the client. Thus, if there was a delay

punctuality index. Organizationally he would look at the confirmation, the deadline date of the confirmation in comparison with the date when the bill was produced. Well, he would keep on saying: õCorti, you are always at 70, 75%, but the organizational target is 90%!ö I said to myself: õHow on earth is it possible that Iøm so far behind?ö I was also annoyed by the fact that my colleagues were above 70%. Iøm very proud, so asked him: õIs it possible?ö He replied: õLook, itøs not only your fault though. It can happen that in the office, upstairs, they have problems with payments and so on and they donøt prepare the bills and when they do, itøs postponedö. So I said, õReally? Well, letøs start another indexö. So, given that a new IT system had just been implemented for, for packaged items, there was also the date when the programmer [Corti himself] or the warehouse had finished its confirmation, so in case of delays for economic reasons, it was none of our business. So, you now see that the number [index] has increased [improved]. However, I donøt think my colleagues even ask for the monthly index, whereas I go every week or ten days to ask how I am doing. But this is indeed because I like being told: õWell done, youøve done well.ö

Almost as if he were ashamed of his attachment to his job and to the firm, Antonino began this narrative by saying õItøs a bit silly butí ö, then declared his attachment to his job õyou care about what you doö (ci tieni a quello che fai), and to CarparCo õabout the firmö. The Italian expression õtenerciö, difficult to translate faithfully, is used to indicate a feeling of care and attachment to something or somebody which is fairly deep and personal. Using it in reference to the job and to the firm gives the impression that

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between this time and when the bill was produced and the goods actually delivered, it was no longer imputable to the shop floor, including Antonino Corti, who was the programmer and therefore the person responsible for the whole process.

these were for Antonino matters of the heart, so to speak. Given the considerations reported above concerning Antonino's youth when he began work and the significance of his relationship with one of the owners, this expression sounds coherent. Next, he introduced an example by saying that it had nothing to do with what had been said, which is in reality very explicative of the fact that he cared about the job and about the firm (*ci tieni*) and of what was argued above.

We observe a fairly strong reaction on Antonino's part when told that his punctuality index was 20% below the organizational target of 90%: "How on earth is it possible that I'm so far behind?" However, Ivo Numerini advised him that a possible cause was delays in the office where bills were produced. His desire for praise, which seems to have amounted to a fantasy of being praised in connection with his performance, was so strong that he even required another index to be put in place purely in relation to his part of the job and that of his unit. In fact, once in place, the index then improved. The explanation Antonino gave for doing something so peculiar as to ask for an ad hoc punctuality index that he checked every week or 10 days was that "this is indeed because I like being told: 'Well done, you've done well'" The use of "indeed" stresses what follows, indicating that this really was the motivation for his request. Furthermore, the "well done" (bravo) here resonates with all the times that Fabio had put his hand on Antonino Corti 's shoulder and said "well done", during his years of paternal mentorship and supervision. This explanation also appears as a fantasy, since in saying "I like being told 'Well done, you've done well'" Antonino expresses this thinking, imagining a scene where he receives praise. Laplanche and Pontalis (1973:314) define the concept of 'fantasy' as an "imaginary scene in which the subject is a protagonist, representing the fulfilment of a wish (in the last analysis, an unconscious wish)". We

could therefore argue that the organizational indexes are fantasmatically the same as the owner, standing for him and his fatherly praise. This consideration of the role of fantasies and their emotional linkages helps us understand why rewards were so important for Antonino and why they were so powerful in motivating him to work with zeal.

Having evidenced the father-child, paternalistic character of the relationship between Fabio and Antonino, we can deepen this reading through the mobilisation of a few more psychodynamic concepts. We can argue that as a father figure, Fabio had become part of the superegoic instance (see chapter 3) of Antonino Corti, which means that for Antonino, one of the positive identifications through which his ego ideal was established concerned Fabio Rossi, who, through his loving and rewarding mentorship, provided Antonino with a model to follow and therefore to please. This point is important, because it helps us see that the payoff for pleasing the parental figure lay in the positive comments that Antonino Corti used to receive from Fabio and for which he so strongly longed now, although necessarily õpackagedö differently, since Fabio was no longer there. It is noticeable, in fact, that Antonino Corti still sought that õbravoö, be it in the form of verbal praise, written acknowledgement (the presidentøs email in the first narrative of this story) or a punctuality index, which, I would argue, worked as substitutes or fantasized versions of the pat on the back to which he had become so accustomed and attached. Thus, it might be argued that the fantasy of receiving even a surrogate of that reward, which, as shown above, was an emotionally charged event, contributed to motivating Antonino Corti to do his best at work, including in the CFT. As shown by the data presented above, Antonino not only shared knowledge during team meetings and learnt from his teammates, but also helped newcomers to learn their

jobs and aided colleagues to learn new work practices. I would add that Antonino would not have exposed himself to such an assessment of his work and that of his unit had he not been sure of regularly achieving good performance.

We can now better understand why the reward described in the first narrative as being given by the president to the CFT members for their excellent performance pleased Antonino deeply, acting as an unconscious echo of Fabio's paternal rewards, verbal and physical. I therefore argue that recognition of a job well done was so valued and sought after because it was further emotionally charged by the fantasmatic investment in it, following the long-term paternalistic relationship between Antonino Corti and Fabio. This contributed to motivating Antonino Corti, also at an unconscious level, to pursue actively the effectiveness of the CFT, interpreting and enacting cross-functional teamwork as best he could.

With regard to this strong quasi-paternal relationship with Fabio, whose leadership style we have described as paternalistic (Erben, 2008), we ought also to consider that it almost inevitably contributed to an increased sense of commitment and attachment to the firm, as evidenced at the beginning of this third narrative in Antonino Corti's story, where we examined his phrase ðYou care about what you do, about the companyö. This is in line with Erben's (2008) study, which showed a positive relationship between benevolent paternalistic leadership and organizational commitment. Furthermore, this is consonant with SLT, in that Antonino's learning, which occurred through meaningful interaction with Fabio, was emergent, involving opportunities to participate in the practices of that unit i.e. manufacturing. As shown above, this also entailed the development of an identity, which provides, according to Lave and Wenger (1991) a sense of belonging and commitment. It should be noted that this is true not only of

Antonino Corti, but of many other CFT members who developed similar bonds with the founding family. We could further argue that Fabio and Mario, as owners of CarparCo, had come to stand metonymically for the whole organization. In other words, as metonymy is a figure of speech in which one word or phrase is substituted for another with which it is closely associated, so the feelings of care and devotion towards the significant other, in this case two of the companyøs owners, were transferred onto the company itself, thus developing commitment and affection towards it. I also mention Mario here, since as shown in the next subsection and as repeatedly ascertained by the data, he represented for many employees a strong figure, who established significant bonds of both positive and negative polarity and contributed to meaningfully shape the emotional and relational embedded context where CarparCoøs employees worked.

Thus, in this first subsection we have observed that the identity emerging from a paternalistic style of leadership and the emotional and relational embedded context were able to affect the learning of CFT work practice and that it did so in many ways. First, it did so in terms of skills, competences and know-how acquired through interaction with Fabio during the years of õapprenticeshipö, which also applied to Pierino Buffetti, as detailed in the next subsection. This relationship also affected this learning in terms of commitment, powerfully sustained by emotions and fantasies about the leader. The interiorization of the owners as parental figures, to be pleased and from whom to expect some kind of loving reward, produced in Antonino Corti a great zeal towards the firm in general, as the punctuality index testifies, and towards the CFT in particular, as shown by his engagement through social interaction in work activities such as knowledge sharing, and as confirmed by the regular achievement of monthly targets, also praised by the president.

6.3.2 A cherished enduring presence

The story that we are about to examine is one of a cherished and enduring presence. Through a series of three narratives, we shall analyse how Pierino Buffetti, the technical office joints team member, recounted his relationship with Fabio and Mario Rossi. The narratives are all taken from one of the two extra interviews I had with Pierino in November 2008, in a lounge area adjacent to the technical office. At the time of this interview, he was 34 and had worked at CarparCo for more than 10 years. In what follows we see how significant this time had been for him and how specific aspects of his identity had been, and still were, shaped by his relationship with Mario and Fabio Rossi, regardless of the fact that the former had died three years earlier and the latter had retired a year after this.

> 12) I: I remember when I was still there, I worked in Plant One for ten years alongside one of the owners, and one of the engineers, Maestri. We used to collaborate on manufacturing equipment... we used to collaborate and the enthusiasm when it all worked fine... I believe that this is what kept me and still keeps me attached, becauseí to the people that are there, I have no difficulty, for now, letøs touch wood, in asking for the collaboration of the people in that plant. In the same way, they have no problem talking to me when there are troubles to fix. í but also how to relate to people, just to take an example, working side by side with Mr Fabio I learnt loads of things, because he was an old fox. I mean, how to relate to people. He was able to unite people. Perhaps something that is missing is glue.

The first thing to notice is how Pierino Buffetti describes his relationship with one of the owners, in this case Fabio, who was the head of Plant One, as a long one, lasting ten

years, and an intimate one: õa tu per tuö, which has been translated here as õalongsideö. This Italian expression suggests a face-to-face encounter between two people who are in the condition of a close and deep exchange. This relationship therefore developed over time, through close interactions and around a common endeavour, the preparation of manufacturing equipment, further solidifying the bond through the enthusiasm arising from its successful accomplishment. The significance of this presence and of this time at Plant One for Pierino Buffetti emerges from his statement that what happened in those ten years kept him closely attached to the colleagues working in that plant, making possible todayøs collaboration with them, including his teammates from the joints CFT. As illustrated in the literature review chapters, the collaborative habit is essential when working cross-functionally. Besides, it is noteworthy that he mentioned how good his working relationship still was with people from Plant One immediately after describing his close daily relationship with Fabio Rossi. It is as if Fabio and the relationship with him served as a sort of relational training space for all the other work relationships. In other words, this relational training space allowed for an emotional and relational embedded context to emerge, able to shape identities also in relational terms. We can start to see how Fabio represented a significant other for Pierino Buffetti and that Pierinoøs identity had been shaped by the relationship with this significant other in a way that made him inclined to work in interaction with all functions, unwittingly preparing him for cross-functional teamwork. The colleagues from Plant One to whom he referred worked in a range of units from programming and manufacturing to quality control. During the time I spent in the technical office observing peopleøs activities, I often heard Pierino talking about technical matters with colleagues within the office but also on the phone with representatives of other functions. At times, Pierino would invite somebody from manufacturing to discuss in person issues related to the realisation of a

joint, or would himself go to colleagues in other units with drawings to improve a certain design.

His narrative then went deeper, considering the way that this long-term, face-to-face relationship, which taught Pierino to interact with all organizational units, had informed this team member's identity. Thanks to the close interaction between the two men, Pierino was able to learn several things, one of which he appeared to consider particularly worthy of mention: the ability to relate to people and to keep them united. Such relational skills are indeed valuable when working cross-functionally, where team members need to combine their efforts towards a common goal.

As if suggesting that Fabio's ability to keep his workers united had generated in Pierino a comparison with today's situation, the narrative ends with Pierino's remark on today's lack of unity amongst CarparCo employees: "Perhaps something that is missing is glue". This expresses the notion that a unifying entity was now missing from the company, as when glue dries out and the various components of an object become separated. It should be noted that many employees, together with Pierino Buffetti, regretted the lack of "glue" since the owners had ceased to be a daily presence. Indeed, the continuation of Pierino Buffetti's narration indicates the importance of the owners' presence.

> 13) I: The fact is that, a shortcoming, in my view, is that, the fact that the owners are rarely seen on site. We haven't seen Mr Arturo for months now. When I was working in Plant One Mr Mario used to visit the plant three times a day and the times that Maestri and I were badly told off by him are impossible to forget. Even being told off makes you grow.

C: Mr Mario was there a lot.

I: Definitely. He knew everything. He would spend the whole of Saturday going from plant to plant. He knew everything. He would try to keep up with everything, I don't know, from a door, I don't know, to the most important things. Nowadays, many employees expect a more massive presence of the owners within the company.

C: The emptiness is very much felt.

I: Yes, yes (very emphatically).

In this part of the narrative, the theme of the owners' longed-for presence is further developed. We see that Pierino, in common with many of his colleagues, felt deep discomfort at the owners' absence from the factory, which he described as a defect or shortcoming. This word refers to a stable negative characteristic of an individual's personality, showing how deeply Pierino thought that the right thing to do, the thing that everybody would expect, was to show up on site. He made a comparison between the "shortcoming" (difetto) of the current president Arturo Rossi, who did not show up for months, and the value of his dead brother Mario Rossi, the founder. Mario would make three rounds of the three plants every day. These rounds also included harsh reprimands, expressed in a peculiar manner: "lavate di capo", which interestingly is also language used with children. It could be translated literally as "head washes", as if Mario would wash the heads of Pierino Buffetti and the engineer Teresio Maestri. This indicates that the reprimands were so effective and harsh that they were able– and possibly even intended– to wash away wrong ideas or wrong ways of doing things, creating the pristine conditions needed to begin again in a different way. In these remarks, we also

see the authoritarian aspect of Mario's paternalistic style of leadership, characterised by a claim for absolute authority and control over subordinates who are expected to show obedience, as illustrated shortly (Herben, 2008).

However, showing obedience, Pierino Buffetti considered these "lavate di capo" as positive and possibly a sign of fatherly care, since they helped individual growth: "Even being told off makes you grow". He was grateful for these harsh reprimands because, as a good child, he knew that they would contribute to professional and personal maturity: "make you grow". The language here, like that adopted by Antonino Corti in the previous story, is evolutive, "grow" indicating that Pierino Buffetti saw in Mario an educative, fatherly figure, as he did in Fabio. In the next section, we will see how differently harsh reprimands were experienced by the manager mentioned in this narrative, Teresio Maestri, head of manufacturing.

What emerges from the empirical material is that when Mario was alive he would try to be omnipresent and omniscient, so to speak. In order to do so, not only would he go round all of the plants three times trying to discover everything, from trivial matters (a faulty door) to the most important ones, but he had also placed his three brothers in key positions within the firm, as emerged during interviews. Thus, the issue raised again and again was the owners' absence from the premises and the discomfort it generated throughout the company. It could be argued that both the presence and the absence of the owners affected the emotional and relational embedded context in very specific ways, as further illustrated shortly: "Many employees expect a more massive presence", where the choice of the word "massive" communicates the great extent of the desire of these employees to have the owners appear on site, as Fabio and Mario used to do. Now, Arturo and Mario's three children, while all actively involved in running

CarparCo, very rarely showed up on the shop floor. Throughout my fieldwork, I observed no instance of their presence on the shop floor, confirming what I was told during informal conversations and during interviews. Employees, in fact, repeatedly manifested their disappointment and discomfort not only because Mario and his brothers were no longer seen among them, but also because those who could have been there as sign of that loved presence would not be available to form the same kind of bond, and therefore to perpetuate the same kind of emotional embedded context. This is further described by Pierino in the final narrative:

14) I: I always say to Dr Severino, my close friend [Mario's son]: õYour father was so charismatic that he would make you feel so energeticö. In one way or the other we have all been imbued with their, with their culture, with their desire to do things. In any case, they were guides to us. When, just to take an example, at night, I still dream of Mr Mario. He was incredibly charismatic. He had a sixth and a seventh sense. Really. When something was not going right, he would always turn up. He was able... his children also say this... to arrive exactly when something was not going right.

This narrative contributes further to evidencing the roles of the leaders in an emotional and relational embedded context, in affecting employees' identity. Pierino Buffetti showed a great admiration for Mario, perceived as a charismatic figure, and had no hesitation in admitting how influential he was for him, to the point that Mario with his charisma could infuse Pierino Buffetti with energy. Pierino Buffetti went further in revealing how deeply his identity was shaped by this embedded context and the relationship with the Rossi brothers within it, by stating that all employees had in one way or another been õimbuedö with the founding family's õcultureö, which has emerged

throughout these narratives as a culture of hard work and commitment, and with õtheir desire to do thingsö, which amounted to enthusiasm and dedication. It could be argued that employees had learnt from their leaders to be loyal and committed to a specific way of working, including many aspects associated with learning cross-functionality. The word õimpregnatiö (imbued) is a fairly strong expression, recalling, for instance, the condition of being soaked in a liquid. This tells us how deeply Pierino perceived himself and his colleagues to be informed by this embedded context and by the relationships within it. His use of the phrase õnel bene o nel maleö (in one way or the other/ for better or worse) indicates that he was also well aware of the possible negative influence on them of the two brothers and that notwithstanding this possibility, they were seen as guides for their employees.

In addition, Mario had become so integral a part of his employeesø lives and so enduring a presence, also fantasmatically, that he would still appear in their dreams at night (positively characterised by Pierino Buffetti, who otherwise would have said õnightmareö) more than three years after his death. Pierino Buffetti seemed to greatly appreciate Marioøs massive presence in the firm as a reassuring factor, from both an emotional and a technical point of view. He was, in fact, impressed with Marioøs skills and his ability to appear exactly when and where something was not right. Pierino Buffetti gave the impression of being astonished but also pleased and reassured, as if by a father figure whom a child can always count on, because of his constant presence and because this presence was mostly resourceful. Notably, Pierinoøs way of talking about Mario and Fabio, notwithstanding the acknowledged limit of a lack of õglueö, tells us that these leaders were a fantasmatic presence which had a continuing effect on

employees, on the meanings work had for them, on the ensuing emotional and relational embedded context and consequently on their way of engaging in work activities.

This story, therefore, can rightly be entitled õa cherished enduring presenceö, since the fact that Mario and his brothers were no longer physically present did not mean that they no longer had an influence on employeesø identity. First of all, Mario and Fabio were present in the CFT membersø identities, which, as shown above, markedly carried their influence in terms of skills learnt, relational styles acquired or meanings assumed. Second, the absence of these significant others may have affected, also in fantasmatic terms, the identities of those who remained at the firm, considering that this absence grieved, disoriented and weighed quite heavily on many employees, like the loss of a parent figure, or at least of a significant other. From Pierino Buffettiøs narration, as well as from those of many employees, including CFT members, remarkable feelings of nostalgia emerge with connected fantasies. According to Gabriel (2000:174), the concept of ‑nostalgic feelingø describes a warm and loving orientation for the past or features of the past, a tender yearning towards it, as well as a resigned acceptance of the impossibility of bringing that past back. It is this nostalgia that contributed to keeping Pierino Buffetti deeply connected to Mario and Fabio, and to the emotions he used to experience when they were present, evoked in the fantasmatic memories interwoven in these narratives, such as feelings aroused by Marioøs charisma, by being cared for or by the frequent harsh reprimands. This nostalgia led CFT members to fantasize those emotions and memories, bringing them alive and making them very powerful. Arguably, these feelings of nostalgia had become part of CFT membersø identities, making their presence endure even after Mario and Fabio had left the firm, and were still able today to keep them committed, inter alia, to collaboration in pursuit of the

organizational goals set for the CFTs. During CFT meetings, for example, I observed that team members were always up to the task, always trying to find the best solutions from both a technical and an economic point of view. They would share the functional knowledge necessary to allow each team member to carry out his part of the task smoothly. They would ask each other to confirm that what they were stating or proposing was appropriate either for the representative of a specific function or for the entire team when necessary. They would also be collaborative in agreeing on new procedures for cataloguing the digital information needed for development of the range. As noted above, the literature presents commitment as a consequence of benevolent paternalistic leadership (Erben, 2008). The point of novelty offered by this study is the role played by fantasies, emotions and nostalgic feelings in sustaining this commitment, which here continued well after the leadersø disappearance from the firm. Besides, these fantasies, emotions and nostalgic feelings, derived from the leadersø absence, also sustained a situated emotional and relational context where identities have been shaped so as to favour the learning of the CF teamwork practice.

In the following section we will consider the relationship between Mario Rossi and the managers, noting its quite different effect on their identity and their ability to learn CFT work practice.

6.4 A looming spectre

This section seeks to understand and explain the limited extent to which the Auto team members are shown by the data to have learnt the practice of working as a CFT. It does this by considering the role played by identity as it was informed by the relationship with Mario Rossi as a significant other. As in the previous section, I will invoke a few psychodynamic concepts, since they can help to explain the findings. Through a number

of narratives extracted from interviews with managers on the Auto team and with members of the Rossi family, I shall attempt to piece together who Mario was for the managers and what kind of relationship he had with them, a relationship which, as the heading of this section indicates, contrasts with the reassuring bond delineated above in connection with skilled workers. This will show how managersø identities were also affected by the relationship with Mario and will illuminate the ensuing impact on their ability to learn the practice of cross-functional teamwork. It should be noted that Mario was very often mentioned in the managersø narratives, whereas Fabio did not appear to have a particular place in their memories and in their narrative elaborations. My speculation is that since Fabio was very much in charge of the shop floor, especially in the plant where joints were manufactured, he had little contact with the managers, who instead had to refer mainly to Mario as their leader.

6.4.1 One-man command

As illustrated in the introductory chapter, after Marioøs death, his children and his brother Arturo decided to start a professionalization process at CarparCo, with the help of experts from a renowned Italian university. The two narratives presented in this subsection, basically prompted by my question on how things had changed since this professionalization process started, show Marioøs style of running the company, specifically in relation to managers. The first narrative is taken from the first interview I had with one of the managers, Alvise Ronchi, the engineer heading the quality office, who was one of the most senior managers in CarparCo and had worked there, at the time of this interview, for 20 years.

15) *C: You've been at CarparCo for a very long time. What are the main changes that you now see in the firm?*

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I: Well, the main change basically is this one. That now people are given more responsibility and decisional power. We now have the opportunity to have clearly in mind our problems, limitations, responsibilities. The opportunity to have a minimum of autonomy in one's own area of competence, in order to achieve what, let's say, the things that can, that have been defined as concerning direct responsibility. In the past, we directly had the owner who basically would decide about everything. Therefore, the various managers and people in charge were there to support, though the final decision was invariably up to the owners in person.

First of all, amongst the several changes brought about by the professionalization process, the one described as the most important was that managers now had more responsibility and decisional power. It is very meaningful that he described the new situation by saying that managers now had õclearly in mind problems, limitationsí ö, which should be standard features of any managerial work. Alvise also stated that they now had õa minimum of autonomy in one's own area of competenceö; his use of the word õminimumö is striking, as it indicates that they had none at all before, which again is really not the expected standard for a manager. The explanation that Alvise then provides for this peculiar past situation is that Mario õbasically took all decisions directlyö. This description amounts to a paternalistic leadership where the authoritarian aspect was particularly prominent, observable in Mario's controlling attitude. He did not directly take into account the intermediate level of management, but decided everything himself. Managers were left with the marginal role of being õthere to supportö.

Let us go further in this description by looking at how another engineer, Teresio Maestri, the head of manufacturing and general plant manager, spoke about Mario,

adding a consideration of the consequences of having been in a close, long-term relationship with Mario. This narrative is taken from the first interview I had with Teresio Maestri, when he was 50 and had been working for more than nine years at CarparCo.

16) C: In your opinion, how is CarparCo facing up to the professionalization process?

I: Well, sometimes itøs obvious that since we are used to not taking decisions, given that in the past decisions were always taken by one personí

C: Mario?

I: Yes. Maybe now this í function is a bit better distributed and you donøt feel í the heavy weight of one figure. Now decision-making is shared. Sometimes maybe decisions are not maybe thoroughly diffused. However, I mean, I believe thatí, I believe, I mean, I donøt know, but I donøt want to talk nonsenseí [He does not finish the sentence.]

The consequences of Marioøs style of running the company and of dealing with managers are clearly signalled by Teresio Maestri when he says, õsince we are used to not taking decisions...ö. This implies that managers, lacking practice in taking decisions, now struggled to do so within the professionalization process. Again, the reason given by this manager is that Mario would previously take all the decisions himself, preventing managers from practising the fundamental managerial skill of decision-making. Teresio Maestri describes himself and his colleagues as not being used to taking decisions, meaning that being cut off from the decision-making process was really a daily matter. Furthermore, he unsurprisingly describes Mario as a õheavy

figureö, whose absence now allowed decisions to be taken more diffusely. The use of the word õweightö conjures up the image of those around Mario struggling to advance, burdened both inwardly and outwardly by this object/subject.

So far, we can observe that Mario emerges as an over-controlling boss, not inclined to delegate or to relinquish decisional power, so that the ensuing situated relational context and the relationship with the leader in it meant for managers not having the chance to take responsibility or to engage in decision-making activities, fundamental components of cross-functional teamwork. In CFTs, in fact, decisions must be taken by the participants responsible for and representative of their units. CFTs convene to make rapid progress on a certain project or procedure, so decisions are readily and constantly needed to advance and achieve targets. In one of the Auto team meetings, members had to decide whether or not to propose that the board should buy new machinery, namely a heat-treating furnace. They started the meeting by saying that they intended to dedicate no more than ten minutes to the discussion of this matter, which had already been partly discussed at a previous meeting, although this was a decision which needed careful consideration, since the estimate was 181,000 euros. In the event, they discussed it for an hour without being able to make up their minds. Very significantly, when Teresio Maestri was repeatedly asked to express a definitive opinion, he replied that if they had not understood yet, he was undecided on the matter.

It is to be noted that managersø accounts became very similar with regard to Mario and their relationship with him. Besides, Marioøs portrayal as a controlling boss emerged not only from managersø interviews, but also from the words of his children and his brother Arturo, who recounted that they too had to refer to Mario for anything from small details to important issues such as investments. They also reported that Mario was

brusque and even intimidating at times, especially when things did not go as he wished. The next subsection takes up this point and begins to consider its implications.

6.4.2 Working with fear

The first narrative showing this component of Mario's character and its implications is from an interview with Alvise Ronchi, who seemed to have suffered and to suffer still from Mario's intimidating attitude.

> 17) I: I must say that it wasn't too bad. However, in the end, I mean, we could say yes or no, but the last word was always his. Right or wrong, it's not up to me to judge. However, now, we are a bit more responsible because, in the end, for the decision that you take you then also have to be responsible for it fully, in all its aspects. Whilst before you would give a kind of formal suggestion and if the owner said yes, the choice was shared and you would lose a bit, if things then went wrong, you wouldn't feel, I always felt a bit nervous. However, formally, We would say, and this is human,: õWe did, he thought the same. No, no, it's not that he can also make mistakes very much. I mean, I didn't make a huge mistakeö. This is a justification, which yes, it's ok, but it's a consideration of the human side, but from a professional point of view, it's unacceptable. [The interviewee giggles nervously].

To begin with, I must admit that transcribing and translating this passage was particularly difficult. The interviewee often stammered and began several sentences without bringing them to a conclusion. He became agitated simply by recounting his experience with Mario. When he stated that he used to feel nervous when things went wrong, Alvise Ronchi revealed a fear greater than the one conveyed directly by his

words. Listening back to the recording, I noticed that when we then moved on and changed topic, the interviewee was no longer hesitant and confused, but spoke clearly and smoothly. These paraverbal components of communication offer a clue to how intimidating interactions with Mario could be and how, still today, the memories of those interactions had an inner echo and produced similar effects in terms of fear and insecurity, as further illustrated below.

The content of this narrative also tells us that this manager was afraid of Mario's negative reactions when things went wrong, notwithstanding that decisions were basically taken by Mario alone, while managers were simply asked to give an opinion, õHowever, if things then went wrong, I always felt nervousö. Alvise uses the word õagitatoö, which indicates exactly the state of inner unrest when waiting for something to happen, in this case something negative. Besides, by saying: õHowever, formally, we would say, and this is human, ̶He thought the same. No, no, it's not that he can make mistakes very much. I mean, I didn't make a huge mistakeøö it is as if he were trying to calm, reassure and justify himself. In particular, õthis is humanö indicates his thinking that since Mario, whom he considered very competent, had taken part in the decision, Alvise could not be taken to have done anything very wrong. It is as if he still feared one of Mario's bad reactions.

As to fearing Mario's reactions and attitudes, it is worth quoting what his own son, Federico Rossi, the 42-year-old head of Electronic Data Processing, shareholder and member of the board, candidly said of his father:

18) I: I believe that there is still a strong legacy from the past where meetings were traps which were… I mean, these meetings … were held to accuse a person, to prompt him, many times it was done this way.

C: So, are people here afraid of speaking because they don't know what might happen to them as a consequence?

I: Exactly.

C: Are you hypothesizing this?

I: Yes, yes, yes. "Well, I keep silent… I'm not going… I won't risk it".

This contribution seems to suggest that meetings were held with the purpose of making people talk so that what they said could be held against them. It is no surprise, therefore, that managers developed fears and then continued to feel inhibited at meetings where they were expected to talk and share, as in CFT meetings. Considering that this had gone on for years, managers would not have changed suddenly, simply because Mario was no longer physically present, as indeed shown in the previous chapter, which provided evidence of the difficulties faced by the Auto team. What starts to emerge as important here is the role played by the situated emotional context, ensuing from Mario's presence but also by his absence, in shaping team members' identity. The issue of Mario's presence, both physical and imaginary, important to improve our understanding of his influence on managers' identity, is further explained in the next subsection.

6.4.3 An uneasy enduring presence

Interestingly, whilst workers, as illustrated in the previous section, loved to have either Mario or Fabio physically present with them on the shop floor and still yearned for their presence or something that would remind them of it, managers appeared to have been relieved by the thought of Mario's temporary absence (on holiday) in the past and by his permanent absence now, as illustrated by the next two narratives, the first from Alvise Ronchi's interview:

> 19) I: I worked with Mr Mario for several years and he was always present on site, … I mean [he giggles] … so, … basically he wouldn't go… although, sometimes we would say: "Why don't you go on holiday?" Like that, etc… But he would strictly never go except when the firm was closed.

The managers' suggestion that he should go on holiday, made in an ironic tone (Alvise was giggling), gives the impression that they longed for a rest from Mario and from what we now know must have been, for them, a fairly oppressive and uneasy presence. The head of the quality office used the adverb "tassativamente" (strictly), giving an idea of how peremptory was Mario's decision, leaving others no choice but a resigned acceptance of his firmness and of his presence.

The second narrative concerning the founder's absence or presence is taken from the reply to a question that I put to Teresio Maestri, the head of manufacturing, already encountered above.

> 20) *C: In your view, how much is Mario's presence still felt today in the firm?*
>
> I: Certainly not at my level. Sometimes someone mentions him and I myself remember him gladly, because, I must say that he was the one who appointed

me, but it's not because of this, it's because, ... he was certainly a charismatic person, ... I also saw him in a critical condition, because he was ill. I'd just started working here when he got ill. Thus, I saw him at his worst. Just when he was having chemotherapy and he had quarrels with almost everybody. Those were moments also almost of, of, of madness also. With his brothers too, and I was sometimes in the middle of it. There are people who remember him gladly, but they obviously remember him only for the good things. They don't remember being badly treated despite having some good ideas. However, I'd say that this is over now. í One gladly remembers an employer since he made the firm grow in this way, but it's clear that now choices are no longer made by Mario Rossi. Choices are made by the factory council, by managers, or by those who are appointed and paid to do it. Now this is no longer, is no longer a spectre that disturbs, that can disturb choices. That's it.

C: Who represents authority here now?

I: Nobody. Nobody.

In saying õCertainly not at my levelö, Teresio Maestri seemed keen to make it immediately clear that at his level, in other words for him personally, Mario was no longer perceived as present. Besides, his õcertainlyö (di sicuro), delivered clearly and without hesitation in reply to my question about Mario's invisible presence today, gives the impression that he was relieved, almost liberated, no longer to have this oppressive figure close to him. It is important to remember here that Teresio is quoted above as having described Mario's presence in the firm as õthe weight of one figureö, indicating that he perceived it as oppressive.

Furthermore, we see here how harsh reprimands were differently experienced and interiorised by this manager in comparison with the harsh reprimands (lavate di capo) referred to in the previous section by Pierino Buffetti, who had perceived them almost as signs of paternal love, helping him to grow, whereas the head of manufacturing considered them a curb to his professional expression (mistreatment implying the wrecking of good ideas). Both his choice of words and his tone of voice indicate that he still felt wounded and frustrated at having been badly treated and not having been heard when he had good ideas. His observation that õHowever, Iød say that this is over nowö, seems to have been directed not only to me, but also to himself, as if he wanted to reassure himself by reminding himself that these facts belonged to the past. Again, this conveys a feeling of relief, almost of liberation. Moving on in the narrative, the same satisfaction and relief are perceptible in the subsequent lines, where Teresio Maestri states that it was no longer Mario who took decisions but other organizational structures or figures.

Another meaningful clue to his relationship with Mario and how the ensuing emotional context affected this managersø identity is the word he uses to refer to Marioøs looming and bulky presence: õspectreö (spettro). In common parlance, this word indicates something frightening, which can be present against our will and can influence us beyond our control. I would argue, contrary to what this engineer stated, that the inner echo of Marioøs mistreatment and over-control, now part of CarparCo managersø identity, was a spectre still able to inhibit decision-making, knowledge-sharing and the taking of responsibility. What is a spectre if not the horrific version of a fantasy (Gabriel, 1998)? Both spectres and fantasies are expressions of fantasmatic activity coming from our most profound and inner selves, one mainly negatively polarised, the

other mainly positively polarised. Continuing the comparison with Pierino Buffetti, we saw in the previous section that he was still motivated by feelings of nostalgia for Mario's charisma. The head of manufacturing, on the other hand, remained inhibited by the looming spectre of Mario's heavy figure. In the workers, traces emerge of nostalgia and supportive fantasies, whereas in managers traces emerge of refusal/resistance and inhibiting spectres. We could argue that the leaders showed benevolence towards the workers, together with authoritarianism, whilst with managers it seems that the latter aspect prevailed, leading to an emotional and relational embedded context which constituted and sustained identities that in turn made it difficult to learn CF teaming.

We now have explanatory responses to the questions which arose in section 5.3, as to why Alvise Ronchi and Teresio Maestri found it so difficult to assume responsibility and fully participate in Auto team meetings. It should be noted that these stories are representative of others encountered in the field. Although the professionalization process had allowed managers to practice their decision-making skills a little more, Mario's influence still resonated in their identities. It is notable, in fact, that it was Teresio Maestri who was described in the previous chapter as the least active in the Auto team and who was most strongly criticised by workers and colleagues for not collaborating. While it is true that an individual may have a shy or insecure character, it is also true that ten years with somebody acting and interacting as Mario did, i.e. harshly curbing ideas and initiative, may not help one to be more self-confident, to become a person who easily shares what he knows or who intervenes with authority in work situations such as CFT meetings. The passage above interestingly ends with this manager acknowledging that there was no longer anyone who represented authority

within the firmô meaning authority in the hands of only one person or positionô and that authority was now vested in the structural positions rather than in specific people.

6.4.4 Passing the baton

In order to have a more complete picture of the reasons why CarparCoøs managers found it so difficult to learn cross-functional teamwork, we have to take into account that their difficulties will have been compounded by the fact that some of Marioøs traits and attitudes were reproduced in his brother, the president, and his children, all actively involved in running the firm, with multiple roles. The following narrative from my second interview with Rinaldo Gatti, the head of R&D, illustrates this point.

> 21) I: Yesterday he [Arturo Rossi] suspended the Management Committee meeting because we [the managers] were saying things that for me were quite interesting, but he was annoyed. These are very different ways of conceiving work. In these conditions thereøs certainly no chance for cross-functionality to flourish í Instead, if people are left free to talk about daily work matters, without necessarily blushing or feeling inhibited by the possible negative consequences of a bad decision, even innocently taken... right? Because this is the issue. Well, if you free them from this anxiety, people act differently.

Arturo Rossi, while certainly not deemed by the interviewees to have as strong or bad-tempered a character as his brother, appears to have been controlling enough to suspend ManCo meetings because he did not agree with what his managers were saying. I attended a few of these meetings and found that Arturo and his three nephews, Marioøs children, invariably tended to intervene often and to promote their own views when they disliked what managers were trying to say. In one meeting, for example, the first topic

to be discussed was the performance improvement plan. This discussion lasted some 40 minutes, during which time the Rossis, especially the president, did most of the talking, often interrupting the managers, who managed to talk very little. Rinaldo Gatti, head of R&D, suggested going round the table to allow each member to present his functional improvement actions, specifying what was being achieved, what had been forgotten for years and what hindrances there were to these improvement actions being carried out. While this proposal found approval amongst the other managers, the president interrupted brusquely, saying that they could do that another time. So the discussion continued as before, in other words with the Rossis dominating the scene, so to speak, and with the president alone taking the final decision, that this review of the improvement actions of each function should be done individually and not collectively during a ManCo meeting, thus losing the opportunity to benefit from sharing and discussing ideas and issues. Although this observation does not come from the Auto team, I believe it to be significant, since it underlines the role of the embedded emotional and relational context hindering CarparCo managers in working cross-functionally. These õspectresö were in some way kept alive by the Rossi family, who perpetuated a rather high level of control and reprimanding attitudes, and who were themselves unable to work cross-functionally because under Mario there had been little room for practicing certain skills that are necessary to cross-functional work, as we have already discussed when we examined Federico Rossiøs narrative about his fatherøs habit of summoning people to meetings in order to make them talk and then using what they said against them.

The narrative from the interview with Rinaldo Gatti continues with a lucid analysis of what happened and why managers struggled so much in working cross-functionally.

These few but rich lines indicate that today, managers still faced a situated emotional context where exaggerated reactions were displayed to any mistakes they might make, even in good faith, causing them in turn to suffer strong emotional reactions such as blushing or even becoming anxious. The head of R&D felt that if people were left free to discuss work matters without fear of reprimand or countermand, they would work better and be able to work cross-functionally, whereas in the present relational conditions, cross-functional teamwork could not flourish. This can also be considered an explanation for the long delay on the part of the head of R&D before starting to communicate the test results for the new Auto pump to his teammates, as reported in section 5.3. Given that he was behind with the design of the pump, he may have feared the judgemental attitude and negative reactions of the Rossi family. Besides, nobody in the firm at managerial level was accustomed to engaging in cross-functional communication and cooperation activities, clearly making it difficult for anyone who had been in the firm for a long time to initiate a change in work practices.

Significantly, the same opinion was held by the budget controller, Ivo Numerini, who at the time of the interview cited below was 42 and had been working at CarparCo for four years. He had clear intuitions on the basis of what he saw, without ever having met or worked with Mario.

22) I: Maybe, in my view, a good deal of this issue comes from the past, from experience. I don¢t know if this is the case, but I have this thought in mind, but I don¢t know the data well, in this case. The majority of managers have done, of ten managers sitting on the committee, eight have always been here. Twelve years, fifteen years. And therefore their life experience, most of their experience has been here. They haven¢t experienced other different workplaces. They might

have previous work experience but over the last ten years what have they been accustomed to? Was there cross-functionality? Or for ten years they have been told: "Do your little bit and don't worry"? I don't know, because I wasn't here, but very often this is the feeling I have. In my view and as far as I know, here in the North of Italy, when there's a strong figure as entrepreneur or managing director, people tend to defend and protect themselves – and that is the objective, rather than working in a group. I mean, teamwork is something that, that has to start from above, first of all, if that is not the direction, it's difficult for it to be doing… cross-functional work.

C: Does the presence of a strong leader push other people into defensive positions?

I: Yes, they always protect themselves.

C: From what?

I: They are afraid of not satisfying the leader's expectations. The leader, meanwhile, doesn't set things up so as to favour collaboration. Because in any case, I believe that it is right that you have a certain, certain… fear towards the one who is your boss, then, in the end, … he is the one you have to show you do your job well. However, it's clear that whoever's above you says: "Do your little bit, do your things…" and that's it, you do your little bit, your things, the important thing is that your things are correct, then we can talk about it. If I have to help other people, I help them. When harsh reprimands start to arrive, everyone tries to show that they haven't done anything silly. If you set up work in a certain manner, which is not only giving rewards, in other words it's not

only putting exterior boundaries, or in any case putting... a í   aí   a fence around work. Instead, from an operative point of view, working together, then people tend to be a bit selfish and to defend themselves. If I make a mistake and you throw it back at me, next time it happens there∅ chaos. What can I do? Rather than making another mistake, I wait, I ask questions, and in this way you freeze things, you immobilize the situation.

The budget controller∅ narrative enriches the line of interpretation followed so far. It tells us that the managers, having worked for CarparCo for a significant length of time, had not been accustomed to working cross-functionally. They had been informed by relationships and by organizational structures so that each would do his bit and no more, each confined to his own unit. The budget controller∅ account also provides another interesting piece of data which confirms what was discussed above about fears and inhibitions. Managers are depicted as always being in a defensive position, always trying to protect and defend themselves. What kind of work dynamics can be established if people are constantly fearful? Can communication, trust and commitment thrive amongst managers so as to facilitate cross-functional teamwork amongst them? Moreover, this narrative unknowingly provides a very psychological answer to my question as to why people continued to protect themselves: according to the controller, they were afraid that they would not satisfy the leader∅ expectations. As we have seen, managers at CarparCo had been accustomed to a leader with very high expectations and with a very robust way of showing dissatisfaction. I would argue that managers feared failing to satisfy not only an external leader, but also the introjected one, and that the latter fear reinforced the former. Now, Arturo Rossi and Mario∅ children, at least in part, maintained Mario∅ tradition of over-control and of reacting badly when something

did not meet his expectations. In other words, they sustained a very similar situated emotional and relational context, in a way sustaining similar identities. Thus, we could argue that the negative memories and the introjected demanding father figure, which already inhabited and inhibited managers, were rekindled by the Rossi family's current negative attitudes and the connected situated emotional and relational context, characterised by them over-controlling, intervening inappropriately in discussions, imposing their views and decisions, reacting strongly when mistakes were made or when ideas different from theirs were expressed in meetings. Again we see the contrast between workers and managers as to their experience and the inner elaboration of this experience: whilst workers' nostalgic fantasies motivated them to please the introjected father/owner and to do their best for the good of the company, managers' inner spectres blocked them, inducing fear of disappointing the intimidating introjected father, with the consequence that dynamics amongst functions at a managerial level were rather unproductive.

Besides, the budget controller stated, consistent with Boyle et al. (2005), that the effective use of cross-functional teams requires that they be supported by various organizational groups, including senior managers, functional managers and team members. In this case, not only was support almost nonexistent (lacking for example trust and a monitoring structure), but managers had been affected by their relationship with Mario in a way which made it very difficult to work cross-functionally, showing the important role played by the embedded relational context in identity formation and therefore in learning.

Hence, the reasons why the Auto team had learnt so little of CFT work practice and enacted it so poorly, as stated in a previous section, are certainly connected with the fact

that working on an original equipment project was a fairly new experience for them and for the company, which may have caused a number of practical and strategic difficulties. However, the extent of their failure to enact this practice is not completely justified by such a contingent explanation. We have identified profound and less obvious reasons, which can be best captured by an interpretative approach such as the one adopted here. Also important and linked to this was the emic interpretation of why managers could not work cross-functionally. We saw how the embedded relational context and the resulting identities have a role in the learning system as it is historically realised, specifically around the question of learning cross-functionality. In particular, through a psychodynamic reading of the narratives, we have seen the impact on managersø identity of Mario as a significant other, his authoritarian paternalistic leadership style, his heavy legacy in terms of fear, lack of trust and lack of specific skills such as in decision-making and communication. One questions how it is possible to work cross-functionally if team members are not able to take decisions or to communicate with colleagues, if team members fear the possible consequence of what they say in meetings or if they freeze at the idea of making or having made a mistake.

Indeed, the identity developed before and beyond a certain community of practice will affect participation in a different CoP. The identity that managers developed when working at CarparCo, in particular when interacting closely with Mario, must have affected their learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork. As noted in the literature review, Wenger (1998) argues that an individual does not stop being a claim processor at five oøclock and that this identity travels with him outside the employing organization. By the same token, CarparCo managers could not leave outside the Auto team what they were and what they had become through years of close relationship with

Mario Rossi. Their scant engagement and participation in the new practice was also rooted, as demonstrated throughout this section, in certain identity issues connected with the embedded relational and emotional context which made the learning system one where the specific learning of CF teamwork was particularly difficult.

6.5 Chapter summary

The key contribution emerging from this chapter concerns paternalism in contemporary manufacturing and the emotional and relational embedded context as facilitating or impeding the learning of cross-functionality. In other words, we focused on the specific learning system as it is historically realised by an exploration of the embedded emotional and relational context and the role within it of relationships with the leader. In the case of the workers, we have seen how the identities developed from their relationships with the paternalistic leaders impacted positively on their ability to learn CFT practice. The bonds between these significant others (Mario and Fabio) and CFT members, formed during years of daily meaningful interactions, favoured a learning system where workers learnt actual skills and attitudes while working towards a common endeavour. This learning, which specifically concerned technical skills, the ability to cooperate and to stimulate cooperation, was sustained by emotional experience, such as care, nostalgia and connected fantasies, which represented strong drives towards good CFT performance.

As to the managers, again through a psychodynamic reading of the narratives, we have seen the impact on their identity of Mario as a significant other, as an authoritarian paternalistic leader, and his heavy legacy in terms of fear, lack of trust and lack of specific skills such as in decision-making and communication. We have also seen the role of the embedded context where Mario's children and brother reproduced at least in

part his style, thus perpetuating a learning system which continued to hinder the learning of the CF teamwork practice through the rekindling of fears and spectres.

In the next chapter, we shall consider another identity issue which emerged from the data as capable of impinging on CFTs membersø ability and inclination to learn this work practice.

Chapter 7

Social identity and learning

7.1 Introduction

In this third and final chapter of data analysis, we continue to answer two of the three research questions posed at the beginning of this study, namely: What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied? How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated?

In the previous chapter, we showed that the identity derived from relationships with significant others at work (i.e. leaders) does have an impact on learning the CFT work practice. In this way, we have taken a further step towards answering these same research questions and bridging the gap we identified in SLT, in other words, the lack of consideration of how the identity that has developed not only within but also beyond and before a particular CoP is able to affect the learning of a new work practice such as cross-functional teamwork, and of how the emotional and relational embedded context/ space is also able to affect this learning.

Again based on fieldwork data, it emerged that another identity issue impacted on the learning of the work practice in question. The ways in which team members talked about themselves and their work, as well as the meanings these had, emerged as importantly punctuated in specific ways. In particular, the identity connected with being a worker from the North of Italy and with being a worker or a manager, understood in occupational terms, was able to impact on the learning of the CF teamwork practice. The examination of this data will help us not only to answer the research questions

above but also to bridge the gap referred to in SLT, concerning the effect of identity on the learning of a new work practice. This is why authors such as Handley et al. (2006) and Whittington (1992) have pointed out the importance of considering relations and identifications in terms of gender, ethnicity, class, occupation and generation, for example, as well as of spatial groupings such as regions and work locations.

Thus, we shall first consider what emerges from the data, interpreting and explaining it in terms of what it means to be a worker from the North of Italy, of identification with one's job and of what we can infer from this in connection with the learning of the CFT work practice (section 7.2). The same exercise of interpretation and explanation is then conducted with reference to occupation and in particular to being a worker, with regard to members of the joints and pumps teams. Next, it is the turn of the Auto team members and their identity as managers (section 7.3). Lastly, I draw conclusions from the whole chapter, pointing out how the different identity issues analysed here can facilitate or hinder the learning of CFT work practice (section 7.4).

7.2 Northern Italian identity

As reported in chapter 2, commitment is one of the main elements, described as team behaviour, that can lead to CFT effectiveness (Bowen et al., 1994) and it can reasonably be considered an important issue affecting the learning of this particular work practice. The CFT literature defines commitment as the sense of duty that the team feels towards achieving the project's goals. It refers to a willingness to do whatever is needed to make the project successful or to ensure a sense of "buy-in" to the project (Bowen et al., 1994:165).

What I discovered in making sense of and explaining what I saw and what I was told by team members leads me to argue that the meaning of work attached to the identity of a õlavoratore brescianoö (worker from Brescia), or more generally a worker from the North of Italy, includes a remarkable sense of commitment in the terms now defined, but extended to all work activities. In other words, commitment emerges in their narratives as culturally inscribed in the identity of workers from this part of Italy, so that it cannot be dissociated from their very selves. This has implications for their commitment to CFTs, in the sense that they will apply the same commitment to learning a new work practice such as CF teamwork.

The narratives presented here draw a picture of this aspect of team membersø identity, from which it will emerge how they identified themselves, the high value attributed to work and the way work was conceived and lived by these workers, showing how it can shape an individualøs identity in terms of the meaning of commitment and attachment and what this entails practically in relation to cross-functionality in teamwork. In order to provide an initial background to this picture, we shall first present a brief profile of the Northern regions of Italy and a few observations on the way people from these regions work in reference to specific matters.

7.2.1 What is work in the North of Italy?

In this brief section, we shall outline of the main characteristics of the North of Italy in relation to work. The North of Italy is sometimes divided geographically and economically into the North-West and the North-East. Brescia is located in the North-West but close to the border with the North-East. The area referred to as the North-West, comprising the regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, Valle DøAosta and Liguria, is one of the most productive parts of Italy and of Europe. These four regions together

produce 40% of Italy's GDP and employ a similar percentage of its workforce (dati Fondazione delle province del Nord-Ovest, 2007). In particular, the GDP of Brescia, one of the provinces of the Lombardy region, is alone higher than the GDP of an entire region such as Sardinia (ISTAT 2009). Another piece of data is significant in relation to the importance of work in this area: the unemployment rate in Brescia is 5.8% of the working-age population, whilst the national rate is 8.4% (ISTAT, 2009).

Furthermore, not only do most people work, but they work long hours. A working day of 10 hours is typical for this area, especially in the private sector, while many people work 12 or 14 hours in times of need. At the time of the study, to my knowledge, the majority of team members worked at least 10 hours per day, two of these hours being paid as overtime. It is important to point out that the Contratto Collettivo Nazionale di Lavoro dei Metalmeccanici (2003) (National collective agreement on the work of mechanics) fixes the working week work at 40 hours plus eight hours of overtime. When team members needed to exceed the allowed overtime, it would be off-the-books work. This is why it is difficult to have accurate official data on the matter and thus necessary to rely on direct observations as a researcher and as a northern citizen. As a northern citizen, in fact, I am aware, for example, of how much my relatives, friends and acquaintances work each day. I have heard numerous and almost epic accounts of firms in this area, mostly in the metalworking and mechanical industry, where entrepreneurs and labourers would do 14 hours a day of hard work to set the business up and to make it grow, and many stories of labourers in large metalworking and mechanical factories working 12 hours a day. Numerous are the stories I have heard of people doing two working days, in other words holding two jobs, one of eight hours and

another of six hours. These often involve heavy work, for instance the first as a labourer in a factory and the second as a bricklayer.

Another indicator of the hardworking nature of the study population is the amount of outstanding holiday. For example, my gatekeeper, who was also the HR and organization manager, informed me that CarparCo had a large backlog of outstanding holiday. This was partly because of the mentality of Mario, who did not like employees to go on holiday except during those periods when the lines were closed, and partly because, as my gatekeeper confirmed in interviews and observations, the employees themselves were so involved in and committed to their jobs that they preferred not to go on holiday other than when the lines were closed.

One of the emblematic stories I heard at CarparCo, for example, concerned Ottavio Rubini, who was described in the previous chapters as a pillar of CarparCo. Ottavio recounted not only that he had been unable to enjoy a holiday for 30 years because he was always worried about what was going on in his division during his absence, but also that when on sick leave after a heart attack caused by work stress, he was unable to rest because of his concern that his unit would not run well without him. He would be continuously on the phone with Fabio Rossi, one of the owners, to solve problems and to check that everything was going smoothly, even when he should have been at home relaxing and recovering from an illness caused by work stress. In this way he was also going against the strong advice of his doctors to change his lifestyle.

It is therefore not surprising that Daniele Marini (2012:32), a sociology professor at Padua University, describes the North as õlabourist territoryö, not in its ideological connotation, but meaning that this society has work in its DNA, or to put it

sociologically, commitment to hard work is an important feature of a highly valued social identity. Marini notes that Northern entrepreneurs are often former workers who start their own businesses by employing relatives, friends or former colleagues. In these conditions, the economic and the personal spheres are intertwined, so that life and work merge, becoming almost indistinguishable. Diamanti and Marini (1996:12) also argue that in this area, work is not reducible to õactivityö. Its õfactualö centrality coincides with its õaxiologicalö and õnormativeö centrality. In other words, work represents the main point of reference of social and individual life, orienting peopleøs choices, assessments and expectations. This society relies on work to provide an answer not only to material needs, but also to the need for acknowledgement and identity, knowing that these needs will probably be satisfied (Diamanti and Marini, 1996:12).

Having briefly outlined the main features of the Northern regions of Italy and of their population in relation to work, we now consider particular instances of how team membersø identity emerged from the fieldwork and its link with the learning of CFT work practice.

7.2.2 The manufacturing office pumps team member: at one with his job

The first narrative that shows us the significance of the social identity as a worker from the North of Italy, and in particular from Brescia, is taken from the second interview I had with Leonardo Brembilla, the manufacturing office representative on the pumps team, who was also the foreman of the pumps manufacturing division. He had worked at CarparCo for roughly seven years. He was 50 at the time of the interview and had begun work when he was 14. Leonardo Brembilla was an extremely skilled worker, held in high regard by his colleagues, both managers and workers, for his ingeniousness in finding mechanical solutions.

The interviewee was telling a story which helps us to understand why he, like many other workers from this region, was so viscerally at one with his job, having begun work as a young man in a place where one of his first experiences had been profoundly involving. On the other hand, the story illustrates what it means to be a õlavoratore brescianoö in terms of commitment and identification with his job.

23) I: Thení   I left and I went to another little firm, la Ferracina, í   where I stayed for a year and a half. Where, I think, I had the greatest satisfactioní   andí   the most beautiful time of my working life.

C: *Really*?

I: Because not even if I had been working alone I would have been so. Indeed, í   with such understanding people, so, í   so, í   so different fromí   I mean, in my opinion, those people are destined to go to ruin. Because people with that view of work cannot make a fortune. I was there for a year and a half, I wasí   reallyí   I did what I wanted, I had the key, I would go in, I would leave when I wanted. í   And if I didí   I donøt know, í   something more because it was necessary to work on a Saturday or even a couple of hours on a Sunday morning, since it also happened that we worked on a Sunday morning, í   it was super, super, super, rewarded.

C: *How many people were there?*

I: í   it was very few people, there were roughly ten people. It was a turneryí   heavy turneryí   . We would work pieces with dimensions ratherí   with a diameter of two metres. And when I think about it, honestly I shiver, because thinking that a 15 year old, who knew nothing about mechanics, he was

at his first… creating that kind of stuff... One of those pieces, if things went well, would take ten or twelve hours… . It was not one of those pieces that if it went wrong, you could just put it in your pocket or throw it away.

C: So that was the most beautiful 18 months of your life, work-wise?

I: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes, definitely, definitely. And that was really a little family-run business, we can say. I was the newest recruit and there was the father of the two bosses – at nine in the morning he would come in, give me some money and send me to buy breakfast. In the summer, I would go to buy drinks because at that time we didn't have a fridge in the place, since it was a little business… . However, I don't really know where I could find something like that today. No, nowadays, nowadays work, especially in factories, is a totally different matter. We could say that the majority of people are just numbers. But this is a, a, a real Brescian business (*azienda bresciana*). Because in reality this is the true "azienda bresciana". The mentality of the bresciani, the veneti, the bergamaschi, of those people, it's really this!

C: In other words, to produce, produce, produce...

I: Exactly, exactly.

C: And to save, save, save.[I said this in my dialect]

I: Exactly, exactly, exactly. This is the mentality of the bresciani, veronesi, bergamaschi. Well, as to myself, if I want to go home in the evening, and first of all looking back at the day to see if we have done what we had to do... or what. I want to be at peace with my conscience. The first thing for me is to be at peace

with my conscience, knowing that I did, I carried out my work in the best

possible way. The rest for me í doesnøt really matter.

This narrative illustrates a number of important aspects of how these workers identified themselves and described their own conditions of existence. From the first part of the story, which would seem to be a story in itself, we can understand why the majority of workers from this area develop such a strong commitment and attachment to work and to a specific workplace. Leonardo recounts his second work experience, which began when he was 14 and lasted 18 months, so the first thing to note is the very young age at which he started work. This can be considered an issue that made this experience very significant in terms of identity formation, having occurred at an evolutive stage of this personøs life. It should be noted that roughly half of the skilled workers on the CFTs had begun work at 14, immediately after completing compulsory education, and the other half at 19, immediately after finishing high school. As was the case for Leonardo Brembilla, the youth of the majority of the joints and pumps team members had been shaped by many years in family-run workshops, some at CarparCo itself, where they were still working. The significance of this experience is enhanced by the fact that for many years these individuals found that every weekday basically consisted of the working day, which lasted between 12 and 14 hours, especially when they were employed by relatively new family businesses which needed the extra effort associated with starting up. Given the young age at which team members had started working and the long years the majority of them had spent in the same employment, we could argue that it is as if these individuals came to know who they were through work. In other words, it is as if the discovery and the development of their identity occurred to a large extent through their work and, as illustrated shortly, through doing their duty to the best

of their ability, which for them meant working long hours, being as scrupulous as possible and having their minds very much focused on their work.

Leonardo Brembilla then went on to portray this work setting and to recount what it meant for him. Here, he had the õgreatest satisfactioní ö and õí the most beautiful time of my working life í ö. This way of expressing his thoughts and feelings shows enthusiasm and even a degree of nostalgia. However, these words acquire more value if we consider the speakerøs character. I know from interviews and observation, both in meetings and in the pumps manufacturing office, that Leonardo Brembilla was rough-mannered, sometimes verbally aggressive, very concrete and practical, somebody from whom one would not easily expect manifestations of nostalgia. I remember, during the interview, my surprise at hearing these words, a feeling that I conveyed in a sober õreally?ö (davvero?). After this comment of mine, he explained, continuing the narration, why this had been the best time of his working life. The owners of la Ferracina were õí so understandingí ö, õdi una comprensioneí ö (literally, of an understanding/sympathyí), which indicates Leonardoøs appreciation for the emotional context derived from the ownersø perceived caring attitude. Indeed, they were so considerate that in Leonardoøs view they were õdestined to go to ruinö, since õpeople with that view of work cannot make a fortuneö. This seems to indicate that Leonardo perceived them as people not obsessed with profit, that they had a consideration for employees as persons and that this human consideration was perceived by Leonardo as directed also to himself. This all shows that this work settingô which, as stated before, is the reason why Leonardo described this experience as the best in his working lifeô is an emotional and relational embedded context which arguably contributed to increasing his attachment to the firm and to the job over the 18 months that he spent there.

In fact, his narration reveals that at la Ferracina he felt free and at ease: "I could do what I wanted", and that he was able to behave almost as if he were at home: "I had the keys, I would go in, I would leave when I wanted". Besides, he felt more than appreciated and rewarded, since if he had to work on a Saturday or even on a Sunday morning it was "super, super, super rewarded". From this emphasis on the high rewards, we may assume that Leonardo appreciated it but also that he considered it almost an over-reward, communicating appreciation of his employers' way of treating employees. This is consistent with the image conveyed by Leonardo's narration, of good people "destined to go to ruin" for their way of conceiving work. Over-rewarding a young man for his work, in fact, would seem to confirm the image of good people not focused on the maximization of profit and the relentless exploitation of the workforce which, again, arguably contributed to further developing attachment and commitment in the employees, who perceived these gestures as signs of care.

However, Leonardo's tale also reveals how tough his job must have been. We can see that this kind of work was heavy both physically and mentally, especially for a fifteen-year-old boy with little experience of work. It was physically demanding, given the dimensions of the pieces being worked, and mentally tiring, given the responsibility for avoiding mistakes in working something that required many hours of hard work to bring to completion. One could say that these are typical features of the work experience of team members which contributed to constructing their identity with a certain meaning of work.

After hearing about the harshness of this work, I probed further by paraphrasing his earlier assessment: "*So that was the most beautiful 18 months of your life, work-wise?*", as if I wanted to offer him the opportunity to contrast what he had just said on the

hardship of the job with what he had previously said on the remarkable positivity of this experience. His reply is interesting and telling. First he confirmed his earlier statements on the matter by repeating õyesö many times, adding õundoubtedlyö twice. What he said next, still in response to my paraphrase, tells us that it was the relational and emotional embedded context that had made it the most beautiful work experience of his life: õAnd that was really a little family-run business, we can say. I was the newest recruit and there was the father of the, of the, of the two bossesö. He described it as a small business, an õaziendinaö, which is the diminutive form of õaziendaö, and õfamily runö (famigliare). This description suggests a sense of intimacy, of close relationships, typical of small work environments. It is notable that in this brief sequence he positioned himself between the presentation of the firm as a little family-run business and the mention of the father of the two bosses, saying that he was the last man in, as if he were the last man to enter that family circle. In consideration of his young age, when family bonds still significantly occupy the relational and emotional space in an individualøs life, we can also assume that he would interpret the dynamics at work in terms of family context, feeling accepted and cared for as one of the family. We recognise in what we have discussed so farô and in what followsô clear signs of paternalism, as also encountered in the previous chapter, showing how paternalism can powerfully shape work contexts and consequently employeesø identities.

In line with this family atmosphere, or paternalistic relationships, is the memory of the gesture of being given money by the father of the bosses to buy breakfast. This gesture seems to have been recorded in his mind as something special, as a sign of trust and confidence, somehow recalling a parent who would give money to a child to buy milk and bread. A similar situation would occur during summer when he had to buy cold

drinks because there was no fridge in the workshop. Further appreciation of that experience comes from the comparison with present-day work environments: õHowever, I donøt really know where I could find something like that today. No, nowadays, nowadays work, especially in factories, is a totally different matter. We could say that the majority of people are just numbersö. Certainly, this portrayal of the present feels very different from what he had recounted in the previous lines about la Ferracina. In those days, work appeared to be everything. At work, one would learn a job and would feel a sense of accomplishment, of being cared for and of being one of the family. This alone would be sufficient to allow a strong identification with oneøs job and to develop a very specific meaning of work, almost inevitably attached to this identification. Again, these were very meaningful experiences, recalled with nostalgia by Leonardo Brembilla. The majority of the skilled workers on the CFTs reported similar experiences, some of them at CarparCo itself, thus establishing really powerful bonds with the firm.

This comparison between the homely little workshops of the past and todayøs cold enterprises was the start of a brief description of the õazienda brescianaö and of the mindset of entrepreneurs not only from Brescia, but also from the Veneto region in the North-East and the city of Bergamo in the North-West, not far from Brescia. Being from the North myself, I offered, during the exchange with him recounted earlier, my own contribution to this portrait, underlining the major focus of these entrepreneurs on producing and on saving, which is an expression of that õlabourist territoryö (Diamanti and Marini, 1996) referred to above. Leonardo could but agree with my description and, as if stimulated by the portrait of the Bresciano entrepreneur, told me about himself and

what work meant for him, providing us with a meaningful depiction of a typical employee from this area.

The words õif I want to go home in the evening, and looking back at the day to see if we have done what we had to do...ö, indicate that Leonardo was basically describing an examination of conscience when he said that he looked back at the day to see if he had done his duty. However, it is interesting to note that he conducted this examination on the way home from work, rather than before going to sleep, as would be more usual in the Christian spiritual tradition. This would seem to indicate that for him the subject matter of his examination was basically work. Not surprisingly then, the following lines refer precisely to conscience: õI want to be at peace with my conscience. The most important thing for me is to be at peace with my conscience, knowing that I have, I have carried out my work in the best possible way. The rest for me í doesnøt really matterö. The phrase õvoglio essere a posto con la mia coscienzaö expresses a clear intention to be completely at peace with his own conscience; compromise is not contemplated here. As to the expression õessere a postoö, this means to be completely comfortable with an issue, feeling that nothing remains to be done or said that might cause unease. He wanted to see and feel nothing that would disturb his conscience, referring essentially to work. In fact, by saying õthe priority for me is to be at peace with my conscienceö, he seemed to suggest that his psychological balance depended on this. What mattered for his conscience to be at peace was õknowing that I did, I carried out my work in the best possible wayö. Again, there was no room for compromise: the job must be done to the best of his ability. If this were not enough, he added that õthe rest for meí doesnøt really matterö, confirming that other issues for his examination of conscience did not receive a great deal of attention.

We could argue that for this man, work was a moral issue and a moral criterion. If you do not work or do not give everything at work, you are wrong; you have almost done something immoral. From interviews and observations, it emerged that this was true for the majority of the joints and pumps team members, who showed great commitment, defined as a sense of duty and desire to do things in the best possible way. They showed commitment and attachment towards work in general and towards CarparCo in particular. Moreover, being from the North of Italy myself, I recognise that this is the meaning attributed to work by the majority of individuals in this area.

A further consideration is due. Whilst the Bresciano entrepreneur seems more focused on producing to gain and save, the Bresciano worker seems more interested in the personal satisfaction obtained through work, carried out in the best possible way. It should be noted, in fact, that not only Leonardo Brembilla but many other team members told me that they certainly needed the salary, but that it was not everything; the satisfaction they would gain from working and doing so to the best of their ability would be a far more fulfilling reward. This is particularly significant if we consider that these jobs entailed working 10 to 12 hours a day in very noisy environments, on machines where they ran the risk of losing a body part if they were not careful, where the physical engagement was heavy in terms of the weights they had to move and where they often engaged in total interaction with the machines, sometimes needing to immerse themselves completely into in order to effect a repair or make an improvement so that a certain item could be successfully produced.

One of the instances showing commitment emerging from the observational data is that while I was doing some job shadowing, I observed that on leaving the manufacturing office at 6 pm, Leonardo would tell me that he was going to see an artisan to discuss the

manufacturing of certain equipment or parts. It is remarkable that he would do this after office hours, in this way extending his working day by an hour or two. It should be noted that in team meetings, when members could not resolve doubts concerning the manufacture of a certain component, Leonardo would say that he would discuss the matter with õmy artisanö, with whom he had collaborated for 30 years. When that component was discussed at the following meeting, Leonardo would provide a solution for its manufacturing.

In conclusion, what has emerged throughout this section is that the meaning of work attached to the local and regional identity of being a worker from Brescia in particular, and from the North of Italy in general, embodies a sense of commitment which is consistent with what the CFT literature defines as commitment, the sense of duty that the team feels to achieve the projectøs goals. This refers to a willingness to do whatever is needed to make the project successful or to produce a sense of õbuy-inö to the project (Bowen et al., 1994:165), but applied to the entirety of the work activities, including the learning of the CFT work practice. My contention is that their commitment and attachment to work contributed to making the learning of this work practice possible and its enactment fruitful, as the narratives in the next subsection help to confirm.

7.2.2.1 *A little triangulation*

In this brief subsection, we will consider three narratives, two taken from interview data and one from observational data, helping to triangulate what we concluded in the previous section about the role of commitment coming from the identity as a õlavoratore brescianoö in relation to learning the CFT work practice. First, we will examine a narrative taken from the first interview I had with Guido Luraghi, the technical office pumps team member, who was 31 and had been working at CarparCo for eight years.

24) *C: How did you take the news or the proposal to be part of the team?*

I: In a positive way. I have a concept of work, I mean, I like working, I mean, we all have to work, so I prefer to work in the best possible way. So I don't fear responsibilities, on the contrary, they push me to do better. So it's surely been a positive thing and gratifying. Because if they made me the proposal, it means that I do my job reasonably well.

Though brief, this narrative is extremely meaningful. When I asked Guido Luraghi how he took the news of being invited to be part of the team and therefore to learn this practice, he replied as if by showing his identity card as a "lavoratore bresciano": "I have a concept of work, I mean, I like working" . It is notable that when asked a question on a very specific work matter, he replied with a sort of declaration about the meaning work had for him, as if he wanted to say that he would live anything concerning work in this way. The content of this declaration is that he enjoyed his work, communicating that for him working was a very fulfilling experience. He then added other particulars of his identity: "We all have to work, so I prefer to work in the best possible way". From the words "We all have to work" we can see how he perceived work as a duty and as valid for everyone, as if he could not conceive of anyone holding the idea of not working. Similarly, "I prefer to work in the best possible way" shows that for Guido there was only one way for a person to work: to the best of his or her abilities. The meaning of work emerging here is the same as that which emerged from Leonardo Brembilla's narrative, examined in the previous section.

Thus, we observe that Guido Luraghi positively welcomed the opportunity to be part of the team and to learn to work cross-functionally, which represented a stimulus to do

even better. By presenting this sort of identity card of the õlavoratore brescianoö, it is as if Guido wanted to tell me that this was how he intended to work at this new initiative and that it was how he was actually working on it, since this interview took place seven months after the CFTs had been set up.

The next brief narrative helps to illustrate further how this meaning of work is attached to the Northern Italian identity and how it impacted on the learning of the CF teamwork practice. The narrative is taken from the second interview I had with Ottavio Rubini, the manufacturing joints team member, another of CarparCoøs õpillarsö and õhistorical memoriesö, as referred to in chapter 5.

> 25) *C: Do you feel united as a team?*
>
> I: Yes [said without hesitation].
>
> *C: OK, you're united, you like what you do.*
>
> I: Sure. Letøs say that the people making up the team are all people who are attached to what they are doing. Theyøre not people, as I was saying, í who knock off at five. No, maybe this is why we are more solid. I mean, I donøt know, we are more attached to what we do.

First of all, as chapter 5 illustrated, the joints team, like the pumps team, demonstrated that the CF teamwork practice had been learnt to a good extent, denoted by new or improved activities such as knowledge sharing, cooperation, competence and knowledge gains, communication and so forth. Here, we see the team described as united and solid, which is one of the manifestations of its success. Ottavio spontaneously offered an explanation for the unity of the joints CFT: õLetøs say that the

people making up the team are all people who are attached to what they are doing'. He also gave a definition of these people's relationship with their work: 'ci tengono al lavoro'. 'Tenerci' is an Italian expression, encountered in the previous chapter, which is used to indicate a feeling of care and attachment to something or somebody, a feeling which is fairly deep and personal. Then, still explaining the unity of the team, he provided another characterisation of its members: 'They're not people, as I was saying, … who knock off at five'. This means that they were not in the habit of simply working the standard eight hours, but definitely more than that. We have seen above that one characteristic of the 'lavoratore bresciano', from his or her first job onwards, is a working day of no less than 10 hours, with long periods working 12 or 14 hours a day. Ottavio's comment suggests that the success of the team depended on a level of commitment typical of workers from this area. For example, during my fieldwork, CarparCo introduced a system of product lifecycle management (PLM),[6] whose implementation entailed a very large amount of data entry and codification. This work, which also affected the range development activities, especially involved the technical office. In several instances, while travelling with me from Plant One to Plant Two, Pierino Buffetti would reply to my questions on how things were going, saying that he stayed in the office every evening until eight to help make progress on the implementation of PLM, which was causing many problems for other work activities, including the range development. It should be noted that Pierino would start work at 8 am and that he therefore spent up to 12 hours in the office.

These narratives indicate that this meaning of work, based on high commitment and dedication, is linked to the local regional identity. What is interesting is that we find this

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[6] In industry, PLM is the process of managing the entire lifecycle of a product from its conception, through design and manufacture, to service and disposal.

high level of commitment and strong identification with one's work in manufacturing and with workers doing very hard physical work in a factory, not somewhat softer jobs such as in the cultural or professional industries, for example.

7.2.3 What about managers?

So far, we have not mentioned commitment in relation to managers. From interviews and observations, it emerged that they too were committed, but not in the visceral way that the workers showed themselves to be. Three issues need to be taken into consideration: that the managers had not started working when little more than children, that they had not contributed to the founding and development of the firm where they now worked and that their work was far less demanding in physical terms, an issue whose importance is not to be discounted.

In this area, most manufacturing firms were started by single artisans or small groups of workers with an artisan or skilled worker at their head. Managers arrived later; the industrial sector in this area originated almost entirely with workers and artisans, not with managers, who therefore developed a different meaning of work, not so pervasive and not so attached to their local and regional identity. Compared with managers, the workers whom I interviewed expressed attachment to their work that indicated they felt deeper and stronger roots. Indeed, after some 40 years, many were still with the same firm that they themselves had helped to build and grow; therefore, they had developed a particularly fervent affection for their work and for CarparCo. Some of the workers recounted that in the evening, at home, they would finish off some paperwork, or surf the web or read specialized magazines to see what other car parts factories were making and how, in the hope of finding new insights for CarparCo. By contrast, some managers recounted that they wanted to do something different at home in the evening, certainly

not work. This is why I deemed it more appropriate to focus on these workers, on the particular meaning of work and on how this meaning had shaped their identity in a way that contributed to make learning the CFT work practice possible and fruitful.

In the next section we shall therefore consider another aspect of workersø and managersø identity that emerged as significantly affecting the learning of this practice.

7.3 Identity as workers and as managers

This section and the next consider another aspect of team membersø identity, intersecting the local and regional identity presented in the previous section. In particular, we will examine the influence of the identity derived from being a worker and of being a manager, understood in occupational terms, on an attitude found to be important in learning the CFT work practice: de-centring.

As reported in chapter 5, Maznevski and Di Stefano (2000) define de-centring as incorporating an understanding of team membersø different perspectives into both how they convey their own views and how they hear those of others. In other words, for these authors de-centring means seeing things from othersø perspectives and acting accordingly when relating to them. This conceptualization of de-centring differs from mine in not referring to existing emotional and relational space, as illustrated shortly.

My observations in the field and reflections on the literature itself lead me to conceptualise de-centring in a different way. By de-centring I essentially mean three things: being able to distance oneself from functional and/or individualistic goals, being able to detach oneself from oneøs potentially ingrained ways of working (i.e. procedures and approaches to certain work practices) and being able to put aside oneøs ego and its hunger for self-affirmation. I have observed that the joints and pumps team members

manifested this attitude and when stimulated by having to work cross-functionally they actually did it, contributing to the good performance achieved by these two teams.

Let us recall some instances of de-centring mentioned in chapter 5. The first concerns the fact that the two skilled workersø teams gradually managed to perceive a common objective and to work in pursuit of this objective, which went beyond their functional ambits. In this way, they proved to be able to de-centre from functional and individualistic objectives and to pursue those of the CFTs. Another example discussed in chapter 5 concerns independent frames of reference. Giacomo Precisi and Pierino Buffetti, by taking steps towards compromise on technical and methodological matters and by moderating their attitudes, demonstrated the ability to de-centre from ingrained attitudes and ways of working. Finally, Antonino Cortiøs account of team membersø ability to choose calmly among two or more equally good ideas, without arguing and without each necessarily wanting to favour his own idea, shows that they managed to put aside their egos and their desire for self-affirmation.

I wish to argue here that the ability to de-centre, which can be regarded as an important condition for learning and working cross-functionally, came at least in part from team membersø identity as workers. In the penultimate section of this chapter, I will argue that being and working as a manager conversely made it more difficult to de-centre. I shall begin by presenting two narratives from interviews with Giacomo Precisi, a skilled worker on the joints team.

7.3.1 The words on the work shirt

In this section, we shall examine two narratives taken from the interviews I had with Giacomo Precisi, the quality office representative on the joints team, who, as reported in

the previous chapter, was another of CarparCo's "pillars" and "historical memories". At the time of the interviews, he was 50 and had been working at CarparCo for 36 years. He was also in strong disagreement with fellow team member Pierino Buffetti, representing the technical office, due to differences in frames of reference. This disagreement was overcome thanks to the CFT and the second narrative presented here follows directly the one where he recounts the resolution of the disagreement. The first narrative that we are now about to examine is taken from the first interview I had with him and was prompted by a question on how he welcomed the invitation to be part of the joints CFT.

26) *C: How did you react when you were asked to be part of the CFT?*

I: Well, as with other things, I thought I shouldn't judge before seeing how it worked. You should never sell the skin of the bear, right? So, let's see, we will then draw the conclusions. That said, if, independently of that, if the company has decided, … if they decided that… it must be done, personal opinions can be relative. I mean, I think from my perspective that maybe is restricted to my little field, little kitchen garden. I've been growing the firm, this firm for 30 years. However, if at a higher level it has been decided that this is what we're going to do, this means that it has been worked out that it must be done and therefore there are no Saints or Ladies, we do it and that's all.

This first narrative will help us see how the condition of being a worker, as a subordinate to higher hierarchical organizational positions offered Giacomo Precisi the opportunity to exercise de-centring. First, his words show his awareness that since CarparCo's management had decided that the CFT should be set up, his opinion as a

worker, albeit skilled, would not carry much weight; his personal viewpoint would not count for much. He then explained what he meant by õpersonal opinionsö, which were his own and were to be seen as relative because he himself admitted that they might be narrow and restricted to his little field, his little kitchen garden, which would seem to indicate his specific area of work. After using this horticultural metaphor, he extended it to describe his time at CarparCo: õIøve been growing this firmö. He meant õgrowö in the sense of õcultivateö, what a market gardener does with his crops, so that the entire firm was now seen as his õlittle field, little kitchen gardenö (campicello, orticello) to cultivate. As a matter of common knowledge, the relationship with the land is ancestrally visceral, especially if a person, day after day, touches it, works it, interacts with it to see it thrive and to live on its fruits. This use of language rich with agricultural or horticultural metaphors also communicates that he had put in much effort and energy, given how tiring working the land can be. It communicates the patience needed to work and to wait for a good harvest. Given the length of his service (30 years) and the quality of his effort, given the patience required to sustain this effort and to await the outcome, given the close relationship there is between the land (representing the firm) and whoever works it, we could reasonably expect Giacomo Precisi to be strongly attached to his own way of working and to CarparCo.

It is therefore remarkable that notwithstanding this attachment, developed over 36 years, he was able to admit that his perspective on organizational choices might be both restrictive and restricted to his own little field, indicating, in this case, his ambit of action at work and in his unit. This shows that he had been able to de-centre from his views on how work should be carried out and from his desire for self-satisfaction in seeing things done in his own way. He then referred to his acceptance of decisions taken

at a higher organizational level, showing a considerable trust and respect towards the company and those in charge, evidenced by the colourful expression õthere are no Saints or Ladiesö (non ci sono né Santi né Madonne), meaning that not even the authority of Heaven could interfere with a decision taken by CarparCoøs management. As mentioned above, he recognised that his opinion would not count for much in these major decisions. One might argue that this was mere subjugation. However, a careful look will reveal something more interesting. Certainly, being a worker, albeit skilled, means that one is normally required to accept decisions of the hierarchy, whether one likes it or not. It would seem that Giacomo Precisi lived his condition as a subordinate, accepting decisions taken by others higher in the hierarchy. In other words, he had been trained to de-centre from his views on work matters and possibly from his will to do things in his own way. However, this does not equate to mere subjugation for a number of reasons, explained partly now and partly later on.

Giacomo continued to exercise his intelligence, expressing opinions on work matters and even on the decisions he had to accept. This is one of the signs that he was in a relationship with his work, that he was not estranged from it as alienation and subjugation would require. Furthermore, we already saw that Giacomo was in a close relationship with his work, particularly evidenced by the agricultural language he used: õI have been growing this firm for 30 yearsö. Drawing on the thought of Marx (1844; 1986), we can affirm that the fact that there is a relationship between the subject (Giacomo) and the object (work) and that the subject would recognise himself in the object, since the object carries an echo, a resemblance with the subject, makes this work human and humanising. The way in which Giacomo talks about CarparCo and his job, depicting a relationship in which he cultivates it as if it were land and in return is able to

see good growth, shows the relationship between the two and it is this relationship and the fact that he can see himself in that work that it makes it a non-alienating job. If Giacomo's work offered only a monetary return, it would be alienating. Since on the contrary it is apparent that the job has value in itself, derived from the opportunity for Giacomo to put something of himself into its products and processes, we cannot assert that there is alienation or subjugation.

Thus, the exercise mentioned above, of having to accept for years his superiors' decisions and points of view, favoured by his condition as subordinate, made him practise de-centring. De-centring then turned out to be particularly helpful when working cross-functionally, where we have seen that it is necessary to step aside from one's own pride to allow other team members' ideas to be pursued, or where one is called to step aside from one's own methodological views, as happened with Pierino Buffetti in the story presented in chapter 5.

The next narrative follows on from Giacomo Precisi's account of the improvement in his relationship with Pierino.

> 27) *C: Has the team contributed to this?* [Referring to the improvement of his relationship with Pierino Buffetti examined in chapter 5]
>
> I: We can say that the team sped everything up. Because, in the end, my personal viewpoint, there might be several personal positions that are defensible or indefensible within the firm, but in the end, in any case, what matters is the common good, which basically is work and that's it. My family is single-income... it's only me working. I have two children, both at high school, and one of them is likely to go to university. You know what this means, right? So,

independently of personal positions, etc, etc, the important thing is to work, to maintain the decency of the family and go on. That comes first. On my work shirt it doesn't say 'Precisi', it says 'Rossi'. As I said before, the common good is the common good of the firm, because in the end we can talk as much as you like, but what matters is that the firm must go on, it must pay its people, it must develop, and so forth. So, I mean, from that point of view, I repeat there are no personal positions, just the normal work discussions which would be worrying if they were not there. Because one of the guys who works with me has got a son who hasn't been paid for four months now. Right? I always say: 'Well guys, be careful. We can criticize if there's something that's not going right, fair enough. But we mustn't forget that at the end of the month if the good Mr Rossi [he giggles] doesn't pay our wages' There are, there are people who have a mortgage to pay, who have just got married, etc, etc. Besides, our firm, compared to others, it's far better, in terms of quantity of work, quality of relationships, etc, work processes, hierarchical relations, compared with smaller firms, I mean, let's say, we are far better.

The first thing to notice is that this narrative follows immediately the part of the interview where Giacomo recounted the relationship between himself and Pierino Buffetti, saying how it had improved and how the CFT had contributed to this positive change. The sequence of the narration is therefore very significant. The narrative reported here, in fact, partly explains what precedes it and why things had happened as described. In other words, we see here at least partly the origin of Giacomo's de-centring attitude, which contributed to resolving the disagreement with Pierino Buffetti and to furthering their human growth. From this narrative, it emerges that the condition

of being a worker offers the opportunity to exercise de-centring. Giacomo Precisi again mentioned that there were several more or less defensible positions, echoing his reference to the relative nature of opinions in the first narrative of this section. Here again, there are views but they are relative to the priority of keeping one's job. Giacomo Precisi had to provide for his wife and two children, in fact, as the sole earner in the family. He knew that he could not afford to run the risk of losing this job, particularly at a time of global economic crisis. Thus it was this time his economic condition as a worker that helped him to de-centre, for instance, from his own positions which were clearly in contrast with those of Pierino Buffetti. His phrase "independently of personal positions" indicates that he was putting them aside because his economic conditions required him to do so: "the important thing is to work, to maintain the decency of the family and go on". His words suggest that he recognized that he and his views were not at the centre of the world and that other matters such as the good of his family deserved to take priority. His lucid comment that the name on the work shirt was that of the owners' family, not his, is evidence of a realistic awareness on his part, of which the name on the shirt was a reminder.

Although all of this may again seem to speak of alienation and of subjection, where he would seem to have become a docile subject who clearly understood his subordinate place in the world (doing as he was told because it would be for the good of the company and so for his own good, allowing him to sustain the life he had), I shall offer a different interpretation. Adding to the reasons explained above, this narrative also does not give the impression of Giacomo Precisi being passively or resignedly de-centred. First, he took the opportunity to criticize the firm and discuss both with co-workers (such as Pierino Buffetti) and with managers what could be improved. As

already discussed, this exercise of his critical faculties is a first sign of non-alienation, since it indicates the existence of a relationship between Giacomo and his work where he could recognise himself. Second, he was very positive and realistic in acknowledging that the firm was good in many ways (quantity of work, work processes, relationships, hierarchy). Both this acknowledgement and what he acknowledged significantly temper what one might call the conditions of subjugation. Thirdly, as illustrated in section 5.2.2 on cooperation, the CF teamwork gave Giacomo Precisi greater motivation and desire to cooperate thanks to an increased sense of involvement in the work practice of range development as a whole. This indicates that his relationship with his work and the products of his work improved, having been extended to the entirety of the range development process. Finally, it came out in interviews and in observations that team members, including Giacomo, felt particularly gratified by the products coming out of the CF teamwork, since they could see in that product the contribution of each team member, that looking at those products they felt in some way represented as single individuals but also as a team. The fact that team members recognized themselves in their work product means that that work product carried an echo, a resemblance with them. This, in turn, shows not only that we cannot really talk of alienation or subjugation, but also that this work can be regarded as humanised and humanising.

We can therefore say that Giacomo chose to act in a de-centred manner and that being a worker created the circumstances for him to practise de-centring. We could describe Giacomo's condition as a form of submission, serendipitously carrying with it the positive and fruitful outcome of being able to de-centre, which in turn proved to be essential for learning and working cross-functionally. Finally, we can say that this de-centring served not only production interests but also the work conditions of Giacomo

Precisi and Pierino Buffetti, who improved the quality of their interactions and their human growth when they managed to stop quarrelling and adopt a new, more positive relational style between them.

In conclusion to this section, it is important to point out that I am not arguing that any worker was bound to develop this inclination to de-centre: they always had the option to choose otherwise. My argument is that the social and occupational conditions of the joints and pumps team members, potentially implying negative aspects such as subjugation and alienation, actually gave them more opportunities to exercise this important ability. This proved, at least for these skilled workers, to have had positive effects in learning cross-functional teamwork, where it was important to allow other colleaguesø opinions to emerge, where it was necessary to find compromises amongst conflicting opinions, or where sometimes one simply had to step back to allow a colleagueøs view to be pursued, for the rewards of good performance, job satisfaction and human growth.

Nor do I argue that this attitude comes only from being a worker. Surely, there are other influential issues, such as oneøs personal identity, independent of interaction with individuals or groups, or the way in which one was brought up by oneøs parents, which is the identity, as discussed in chapter 6, derived from the relationship with the owners, who were seen to represent significant others for their employees. Thus, the identity as workers examined in this section, understood in occupational, social and economic terms, is one of the issues possibly contributing to the development of the de-centring ability which played a role in the learning of the CF teamwork practice and which therefore needs to be taken into account. The next section considers de-centring in relation to being a manager, i.e. in occupational terms.

7.3.2 Identity as managers

This penultimate section of the chapter considers the identity connected with being a manager in terms of occupation and its impact on the learning of the CF teamwork practice. We will explore narratives where managers, in carrying out their role as managers, tended to adopt a self-centring attitude rather than a de-centring one, due to their occupational identity and its social and economic embedded context, arguably representing a hindrance to the learning of the practice in question.

7.3.2.1 *Ethnography inside and outside CarparCo*

In order to understand the meaning of the narratives examined below, it is first important to appreciate the situated social context where those stories take place, so let us begin with an attempt to explain what it means in Italy to be a manager. First of all, managers usually have a university degree, which is considered very prestigious. Italian graduates are called õdottoriö and tend to prefer this title to be used. The degree creates a status in itself. University graduates are revered and respected, at least formally. Within CarparCo, located in a very traditionalist area where this kind of attitude is even more noticeable, all employees with a university qualification were called õdottorö, followed by their first name or family name. It was odd to hear one of Marioøs children being called õdottor Severinoö rather than õdottor Rossiö, with an obvious intention to show reverence for the title but to maintain a familiar tone by using his first name. Although I do not like being called õdottoressaö and although I have never introduced myself in that way to the people in CarparCo, most of the time people would call me and refer to me as õdottoressa Carlaö which, after spending years abroad, was strange and amusing at the same time. Thus, CarparCoøs managers, who are mostly graduates, enjoy the associated social status. At CarparCo, I observed that managers were treated

with respect and not often openly questioned, in recognition of their title and hierarchical position, whereas in private informal conversation, workers would readily say that this or that manager did not understand a thing. In the case of one particular manager, I was repeatedly told by some team members not only that he was not able to do his job, but also that they had to make up for his mistakes and omissions. Notwithstanding this manager's behaviour caused problems to subordinates, very rarely did they face him openly to try to change things.

If we add the managerial role to the degree, the phenomenon is enhanced. The role calls for power and prestige, both being acted out, enjoyed and acknowledged. This will tend to encourage the manager to feel superior and make others likely to consider him and treat him as superior, such as by not questioning him. This kind of social embedded context represents a boost to their egos, rendering de-centring more difficult when the need comes; the bigger the ego, the more difficult the de-centring. Besides, individuals enjoying this social status generally behave as if they could easily find another job, and this was true of some CarparCo managers. De facto, as shortly illustrated, within a few weeks three managers resigned from CarparCo, having found alternative employment. They did not think that they had to accept decisions that they really did not agree with, so they simply changed employer. We also have to consider, as discussed above, that managers might have developed a less strong sense of commitment, which could not therefore help them to tolerate or to overcome difficult situations. Overall, it seems that their social and economic position provided them with fewer opportunities to practise their de-centring skills than was the case for the workers. The narratives that follow aim to show how managers in CarparCo behaved and talked, so as to see what we can infer regarding their social status and their ability to de-centre.

7.3.2.2 *Turning the handle*

This first narrative is from an interview with Rinaldo Gatti, the head of R&D, 43 years old and with eight years service at CarparCo, who was quoted in the previous two chapters in relation to the problematic cross-functionality amongst CarparCo managers. The narrative examined here refers to a time when he was in charge of the plant where pumps were manufactured and when work processes were easier to control, because the firm was smaller. Basically, he was describing an older version of skilled workersø cross-functionality, from which he emerges as coordinating the contributions of all functions to the realization of the pumps.

> 28) I: You should know that before, in other words that when í water pumps was just one plant with one operating structure, I was the one in charge of the water pumps industrialization and I was the one looking after the cross-functional coordination. But it was easy, because there were just a few of us. Quality control was carried out by eye and it worked perfectly well. I mean, there was no problem. With only one product, a sight check was more than enough. In fact we were goingí fine. Perhaps it might have gone better, but we had never had a gross problem of time to market or a remarkable problem of í industrializationí The reason was that, by sight, I would do, I would take someone from the buying office, someone from manufacturing, someone from the programming office, put them together, turn the handle, and the thing would come out. However, me, I was me. I was a manager. If I said something to the buying office, that was it, right? I was a kind of despot, in a good sense. But, I mean, it was easy to do things. I would tell somebody: õDo it this way, do it that

way, do that other thing.ö. And therefore, letøs say a pretty primitive way of running things, if you like, but it was good enough.

Firstly, it is important to consider how Rinaldo said that he was in charge of the whole water pumps industrialization and of cross-functional coordination, by looking at the words he uses to say that these were his tasks: õI was the oneí ö (...lafacevo ioí , í curavo io). Using õioö (me/I) makes the subject explicit, since subject pronouns are normally redundant in Italian, where the subject of a verb can be understood from the conjugation of the verb itself. Here, where the subject is stated in postponed position, it gives the impression that the speaker wants to stress the importance of his own role as protagonist. Thus, in this introduction, Rinaldo Gatti was telling me two things: that he was in control of the cross-functional work well before the pumps team had been established and that he was pleased with this role. He then continued his story by describing the process of pumps industrialization as successful, explaining that this success was due to him being in command of the matter himself, in this way showing self-importance. Next, in how he described his way of conducting this cross-functional operation, we can see how he referred to his subordinate colleagues as if they were objects that he could physically manipulate: õI would take someone...ö. õTo takeö (prendere) is a verb that immediately suggest a physical action for which one would use oneøs hands. He spoke as if he were fully in control of his colleagues, as if they were pretty much devoid of will or freedom, which was not of course the case. Then he would õturn the handleö, again expressing a sense of control and mechanistic manipulation, without the subjects/objects knowing that they were being treated like the ingredients of a cake, to put it nicely. However, the narrator depicted the cake in a fairly disparaging manner, very much in line with how he described the process of making it:

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õand the thing would come outö. He used generic and casual terms (õit would come out ö, õthe thingö), as if the thing in question were a conglomerate of inanimate stuff ensuing from an anonymous and automatic process, rather than the outcome of free and intelligent interactions amongst human co-workers. This all speaks of a rather self-centred attitude of this manager to group dynamics at work, an impression amplified by his depreciatory way of addressing his subordinate colleagues.

But this is not the end of this story. In his narration, Rinaldo Gatti then expanded on what he had mentioned at the beginning as to what had made this possible. By saying õhowever, me, I was meí ö, he stressed the importance of his very self, of his own identity in the success of this work process. And this identity to which he was giving so much importance was that of a manager: õí However, me, I was me. I was a manager. If I said something to the buying office, that was ití ö. We see here that he was aware of his hierarchical superiority and used it to give effect to his commands to subordinate representatives of the various functions. Adding that he could do this because he was a manager is a clear reference to his social status and to the power that this commanded. He also recognized that he was a kind of despot, albeit in a good sense, in any case furthering his portrayal as a self-centred and controlling figure. This narrative resonates with the situated social context described in the previous section, which possibly favoured this self-centred attitude.

From this story, the main character, who is also the narrator, emerges as a sort of all-powerful ego who gets things done by manipulating the cogs in the machine and turning a metaphorical handle, which does not really embody a de-centred attitude. Obviously, the point is not to make a value judgment on the person and the way he recollected his past behaviour; besides, it is important to acknowledge that a leading role often entails

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firmness and assertiveness. However, it would also seem that this leading role favoured in Rinaldo Gatti a certain tendency towards self-importance, a depreciatory attitude towards subordinates and the enjoyment of a position of power, which seem to represent a sufficient basis to question the extent to which he might have been able to de-centre from himself, to put aside personal views, communication styles, or ways of working, as often needed for learning and operating CF teaming.

7.3.2.3 *A disarming admission*

The last narrative is that of Tiziano Acquistapace, the manager of the buying office, who was 45 and had been working at CarparCo for three years at the time of this interview. The narrative basically refers to the time of turmoil that CarparCo was going through, around the end of my ethnographic study, when three important figures resigned. Two of these were involved in the Auto team: Osvaldo Romagnoli, the team leader, and Rinaldo Gatti, head of R&D. They both resigned largely because of the problems faced by the Auto team, reported in part in the previous chapters, concerning managersø poor learning of cross-functional teamwork. Together with these problems, when the tests on the pump failed to yield the hoped-for results and the deadline was getting closer, it became clear that the project was very likely to fail. When this happened, these two actors, already having reasons for being de-motivated, as illustrated shortly, decided to resign.

On one hand, Osvaldo Romagnoli, who was extremely experienced in aftermarket products, found himself the unwilling leader of an original equipment team. On the other hand, Rinaldo Gatti suffered from a lack of trust on the part of the CarparCo board, who remained dubious about the Auto project and failed to make Rinaldo feel completely supported. The third person who resigned, Matteo Sereni, was a CarparCo

cornerstone who had been with the firm for some 20 years, the right-hand man of the head of home sales. The fact that these three people all resigned in the same period, from a firm where people were usually employed for their entire working lives, provoked a stir, a sense of instability and the feeling of a remarkable lack of cohesiveness and commitment, to the point that one of the managers, Tiziano Acquistapace, decided that something had to be done about it. He had initially thought of convening the board to propose that he himself should coordinate the managers, so as to favour cohesiveness and commitment, both within and outside the Auto team. Let us examine his account.

> 29) *C: In your opinion, if you managers faced the owners, as a united front, with shared ideas, with suggestions, would the owners be more or equally willing to listen to you?*
>
> I: No, they would be more willing. Yes, but we would have to go to them united, solid and with ideas.
>
> *C: Is there a manager amongst you who could take the lead in this matter?*
>
> I: Do you want the truth?
>
> *C: Yes.*
>
> I: I thought about it. Before, about doing it individually because,í Well, then I had a talk with Mr Arturo [CarparCo president, the founderøs brother] and sort of contented myself with that. But last Tuesday my intention was to convene the board and go there to talk personally about this. Then I clarified, you see. I talked a little bit with Mr Arturo, who agrees with me on the fact that it is

paramount that we have to be united. It is necessary to close ranks at the moment. Because these resignations are very telling.

C: Especially amongst you managers [Referring to the importance of being united].

I: Exactly.

C: Now there's a fragmented board, a fragmented management, there's a fragmented workforce. Cohesiveness has to start somewhere, doesn't it? But it needs someone strong enough. Maybe it's something worth thinking through.

I: Yes. Certainly, yes. I thought about it. I thought about it, but I had thought about going individually. I wouldn't even know how, though.

C: I don't know how much you will be heard if you go individually.

I: Hm. It depends though,… I mean, Maybe the fact that I thought about going individually was because I was hoping for personal recognition. Because, you know, individually you think more about yourself. In effect, you can't think about going individually if you have only the good of the firm in mind and not your ego, maybe to gain more power.

This narrative, actually produced jointly by myself as interviewer and by this manager as interviewee, tells us immediately that CarparCo's managers were not united: "Yes, but we would have to go to them united, solid…". This reply to my question as to how the managers should present to the board in order to be heard about what to do to solve problems which made it difficult for managers to do their work, especially teamwork, suggests that they usually worked individually, without cooperating and without tapping

into the strength of acting as a group, or as a cross-functional team. And what follows shows that they did not manage to go together to the senior management to talk about the situation and about solutions to it.

I therefore sought to provoke a further response by asking who, amongst the managers, could lead such a united front, prompting his admission that he had initially thought of putting himself forward for this role: This consideration of an individual initiative can be seen to represent further evidence of the lack of unity amongst managers and a lack of cross-functionality, since the managers who would supposedly have had to go to the senior management included those working in the Auto team. That he considered convening the board to discuss personally the matter of the three resignations signals not only a lack of unity and cross-functionality amongst managers, but also a tendency towards self-centring, notwithstanding that Tiziano Acquistapace recognised, together with Arturo Rossi, a strong need to achieve unity and solidarity, to õserrare I ranghiö (close ranks), a military expression which indicates the compact strength of a group of soldiers going into battle.

However, this unity had not been achieved for several reasons discussed throughout the analytical chapters, one of which was the lack of de-centring favoured by the social embedded context from which managers came and in which they lived.

In contrast with this situation concerning managers, it is worth mentioning something I witnessed during a joints team meeting in July 2008, in a meeting room in Plant One. It happened that the members of the joints team found themselves in disagreement with the managers in relation to technical and strategic issues. Their way of dealing with this friction was to compose an email jointly to send to the managers. The text was agreed

during the meeting and the team leader, Antonino Corti, would not let members go until each of them had made a contribution and given his approval. I too was involved in the writing of this letter, helping them to find a clear and appropriate way of expressing their thoughts. From this little narration emerges once more both the cohesiveness of the group and the de-centred attitude of team members such as Antonino Corti. The team leader did not appear to be driven by a desire for self-affirmation to the detriment of his colleaguesø positions, preferring to involve all team members in replying to the managers, which also meant sharing responsibility for the action.

All this constitutes further evidence that skilled workers indeed became and behaved as a team, more specifically a cross-functional team. We have also understood that the two skilled workersø CFTs achieved these learning outcomes partly thanks to their de-centring attitude, manifested on several occasions, which was by contrast scarce among the managers, who proved not to be sufficiently united or effective, inside or outside the Auto team.

Returning to the interview with Tiziano Acquistapace, another question of mine prompted him to add to his admission: õThe fact that I thought about going individually was because I was hoping for personal recognitioní ö. This desire for personal reward reveals this managerøs difficulty in de-centring from his quest for self-affirmation which, in turn, pushed him to act individually rather than in concert with his colleagues at the same hierarchical level.

The few lines ending Tizianoøs admission are extremely eloquent, since they contain many expressions which reflect a self-centred attitude: õyou think more about yourselfö, õyour egoö; or a hunger for self-affirmation, as discussed earlier: õmaybe to gain more

powerö. Importantly, the interviewee himself recognised that these elements would not allow the firm to thrive; and I would add that nor would they allow the managers to work cross-functionally. The contrasting success of the skilled workersø CFTs in learning cross-functionality teaches us that some de-centring is indeed necessary for effectively learning CF teamwork practice and that the social embedded context impacts on identity so as to make it more or less inclined towards de-centring.

7.4 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided further answers to the research questions on how identity affects the learning of the CFT work practice and how the differences in learning evidenced by the empirical data can be accounted for by the identity issues which emerged. First, we discovered how for members of the skilled workersø teams the meaning of work was attached to the local and regional identity of being a worker from Brescia in particular, and from the North of Italy in general. We also saw that this particular meaning of work embodies a sense of commitment which is consistent with what the CFT literature defines as commitment, but applied to the entirety of the work activities including the learning of the CFT work practice. Furthermore, this meaning of work, where workers are so committed and dedicated, is also attached to a local regional identity of people who are in manufacturing, doing very hard physical work in a factory.

In the second part of the chapter, we considered the impact of the identity as workers and managers, understood in occupational terms, on an attitude, de-centring, which was found to be influential in learning the practice of CF teaming. As to workers, the argument put forward is that the potentially alienating and subjugating social, economic and occupational conditions of the joints and pumps team members actually gave them more opportunities to exert this important ability. This proved, at least for these skilled

workers, to have had positive effects in learning cross-functional teamwork, where it was important to allow other colleagues¢ opinions to emerge, where it was necessary to find compromises amongst conflicting opinions, or where sometimes one simply had to step back to allow a colleague¢s view to be pursued, for the rewards of good performance, job satisfaction and human growth.

As to managers, we saw that in a situated social context which facilitated self-centred attitudes, the leading role assumed by managers further favoured a certain tendency towards self-importance, a depreciatory attitude towards subordinates and the enjoyment of a position of power often detrimental to cooperation and cohesiveness amongst managers. This represented a sufficient basis to question the extent to which managers might have been able to de-centre in all those instances, such as cross-functional teamwork, where it is necessary to put aside personal views, communication styles, or ways of working.

In the next chapter, we shall discuss what we have learnt from these three chapters of analysis, to what extent the research questions have been answered, and what further issues this study raises for future research.

Chapter 8

Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Introduction

In this last chapter of the thesis I return to my main research question and the three sub-questions that emerged at the end of the third chapter to discuss the answers I propose to give to these questions. These answers are based on a reflection on the results of my research and their empirical and theoretical implications, specifically for the study of CFTs and learning in organisations, but also more broadly for the study of organisational behaviour. The chapter is structured as follows. In section 8.2 and its subsections, I summarize the research findings by discussing answers to each research question in turn. In section 8.3, I elaborate a number of theoretical and empirical implications arising from the research findings. The contributions are then completed by presenting a methodological consideration of my own status as a blind researcher/ethnographer (section 8.4). I close the chapter by drawing overall conclusions (section 8.5).

It is useful here to list once more the main research question and the three sub-questions:

- How does identity affect the learning of the practice of cross-functional teamwork?
    - How does the learning of the practice of CF teamwork vary in the different CFTs studied?
    - What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied?

How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated?

8.2 Summary of the research findings

For ease of reference, the sub-questions listed above are used as headings for the following three sub-sections.

8.2.1 How does the learning of the practice of CF teamwork vary in the different CFTs studied?

The first chapter of data analysis examined the fieldwork data, both observational and from interviews, so as to answer the first research sub-question. Of the teams studied, two (the joints and pumps CFTs) were composed of skilled workers and the third of managers working on the Auto project. There were stark differences in the way the employees involved appropriated and learnt the CFT practice. The main difference was between the workers and the managers. The workers implemented CF teamworking successfully. Here, ÷successfullyø means that they learnt and reproduced autonomously the CFT practice in a way that was functional to the innovation they were asked to deliver and the performance goals set by managers. Workers also expressed an overall positive view of CF teamwork and the learning that this generated for their work and their relationships at work. They engaged in a number of activities of knowledge sharing, cooperation, communication, etc that proved fundamental to the way the CF teamwork practice was actualised and embedded in their daily work practice. In contrast, the managers never fully implemented CFT working successfully. They held a few sporadic meetings and CF teaming never became a significant part of their working practice. They expressed no significant positive attitude towards the CFT or any

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learning related to it. The results achieved by the managers' CFT never met its performance objectives as set by the CEO.

What one learns from this aspect of my study is that CF teamworking becomes embedded in the working practice via the emergence of a 'virtuous learning system' (Fig. 8.1), which is a system of activities fundamental to the way CF teamwork was successfully actualised in practice. The following are some of the key activities that played a significant role in learning to work cross-functionally and therefore implement successfully the cross-functional teamworking practice: competence and knowledge-gaining activities, cooperation activities, communication and knowledge flows. All these knowledge-sharing activities interacted with each other in a dynamic manner, allowing participants to overcome independent frames of reference, identified by the CFT literature as one of the potential barriers to effective CF teaming, and a positive impact on performance, with the consequent improvement of both products and work processes associated with the CFT objectives set by management.
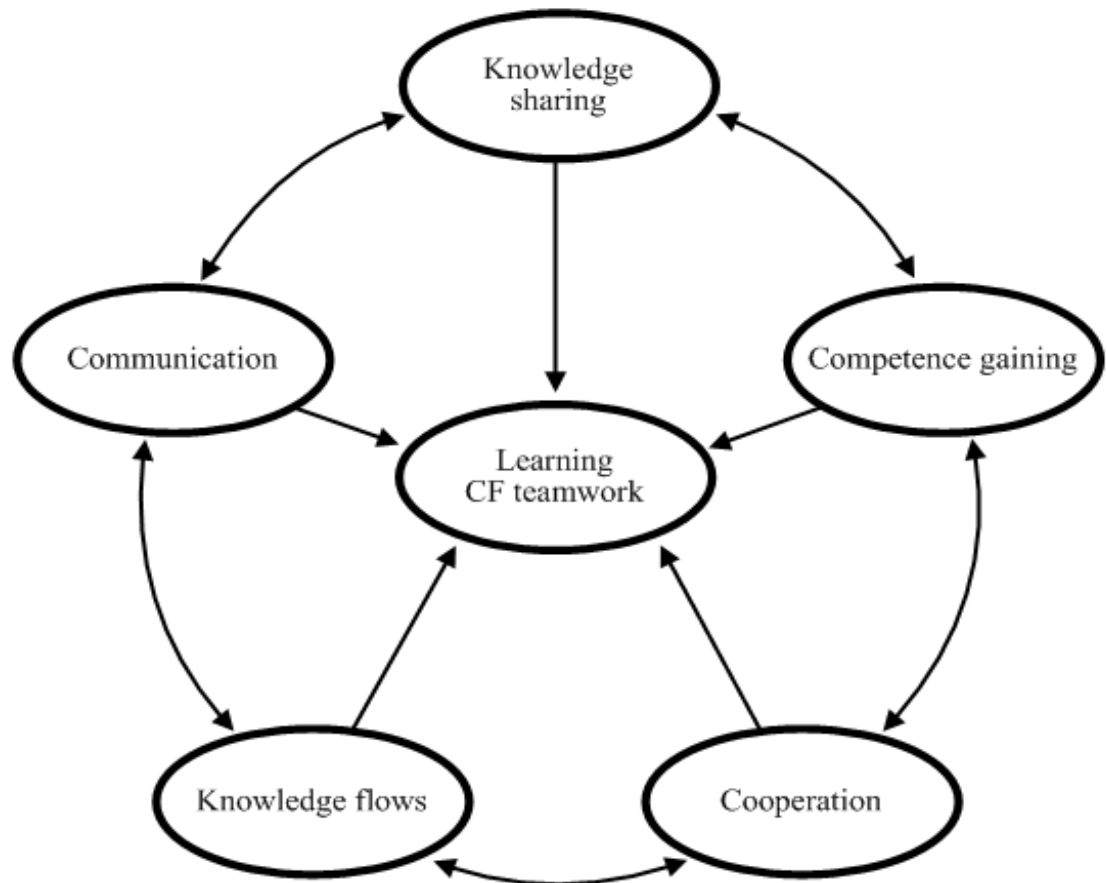
Fig 8.1: Virtuous learning system

To summarise, while the workersø CFT was made possible by a virtuous learning system, this was never fully present in the managersø CFT. In contrast to the workers, the managers never developed and/or transformed the system of activities comprising successful CF teamwork practice. They did not engage in sustained knowledge sharing activities and their communication and cooperation activities were random and of low density.

The learning of cross-functionality by workers and managers can be accounted for by different, contingent, explanations. My study, however, has focused on the identity issues as they emerged in the fieldwork. I shall now discuss them in depth in the next sections.

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8.2.2 What identity issues emerge as most relevant to the phenomenon and context studied?

In this subsection, I shall consider how the second research question has been answered. During the fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis, what has emerged from my study is that identity, defined as the way people make sense of, reflect on and relate to themselves and others, is complex and multi-faceted and that it has a deep impact on the learning of cross-functionality and specifically the successful learning of CF teamworking. In my ethnography I have identified three aspects of identity that had a significant impact on learning cross-functionality (Fig. 8.2): relational identity, social and regional identity, and occupational identity. To clarify, they are all interrelated and distinctions among them are purely analytical, but nonetheless useful to highlight specific features and qualities and how they facilitate or impede the constitution of the virtuous learning system identified above.
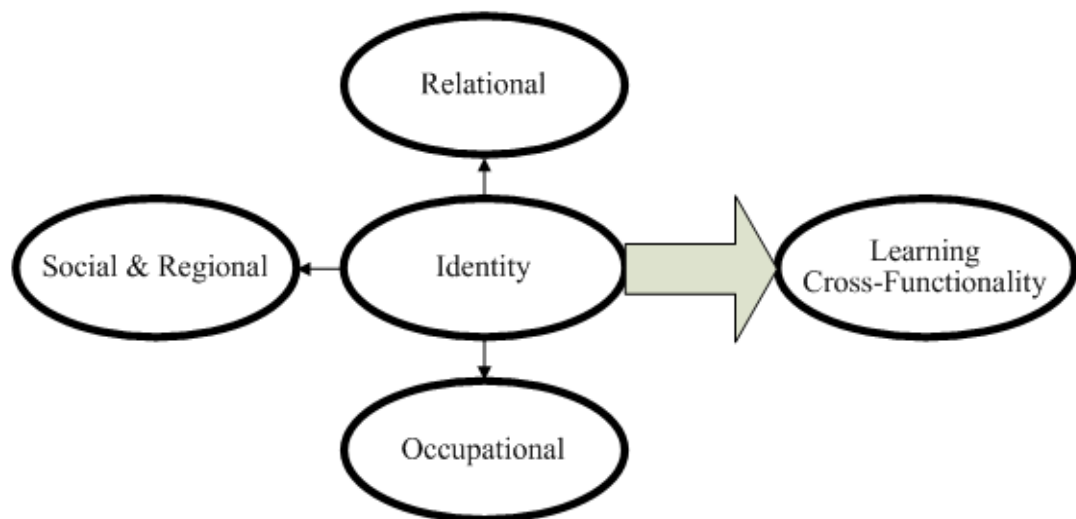
Fig 8.2: Three aspects of identity affecting the learning of CF teamwork

The first aspect is the relational identity derived from the relationship with significant others, who in this case were represented by the Rossi brothers, Mario and Fabio,

founders of CarparCo. These relationships were found to be strong and their ongoing influence was evident in workersø and managersø identities. The second aspect of identity affecting the learning of the work practice in question was the social and regional identity connected with being a worker from the North of Italy and the third was the occupational identity connected with being either a worker or a manager. Below I delve into each of these identity issues, showing their impact on learning cross-functionality by linking them back to my third research sub-question.

8.2.3 How can the different learning outcomes highlighted by the empirical study be accounted for by the identity issues embedded in the context investigated?

To answer my final research sub-question I shall examine in turn each of the distinct identity issues encountered throughout the study.

8.2.3.1 *Relational identity and paternalism*

A key finding that emerged from my study was the importance of the emotional and relational embedded context as facilitating or impeding the learning of cross-functionality. Specifically, in my case, this emotional and relational context was characterised by a strong paternalism. This was perhaps surprising in a company that implemented advanced post-bureaucratic managerial practices such as CFTs, but my study did find that paternalism played a central role in the organizing and working practices of just such a contemporary manufacturing company. To clarify, paternalism here has the status of an emerging explanatory concept; in other words, I did not set out to investigate paternalism, which instead represented a concept emerging from the field data that helped me to understand the specific organizational occurrences.

The review of the relevant literature carried out by Pellegrini and Scandura (2008) reveals that paternalism is a new and fascinating area of research, which has steadily developed over the past 15 years. These authors suggest, however, that much more research is needed, particularly into the outcomes of paternalistic leadership, which can be defined as a father-like leadership style where strong authority is combined with concern and considerateness (Westwood and Chan, 1992). In this regard, the following discussion represents a contribution to addressing the gap in understanding the outcomes of a paternalistic style of leadership, both benevolent and authoritarian. As to my study, when I considered the contribution to managersø identities of their relationships with the owners/leaders, I encountered essentially the converse of Marioøs reassuring and fatherly omnipresence and its effect on the workersø identity. While the skilled workers were reassured by an omnipresent boss, the managers, whose organizational role clearly required more decisional space, perceived this way of leading the firm and its managers as invasive. Thus, both workers and managers recognised a paternalistic leadership style on the founderøs part, but whereas for the workers its benevolence was evident, for managers the authoritarian aspect was particularly prominent. It is also worth noting that existing studies have been carried out mainly in the Middle East, Asia-Pacific and Latin America (Dorfman & Howell, 1988; Ali, 1993; Aycan et al., 2000; Ayman & Chemers, 1991). My work makes an additional contribution in that it considers a context that this literature has not explored, namely that of the West, of Europe and specifically of Italy, in a manufacturing sector characterised by late capitalist development.

The first identity issue that may account for the distinct learning outcomes of managers and workersø CFTs concerns the skills, competences and know-how that the workers

(unlike the managers) were able to acquire through daily and meaningful interaction with the leaders during the years of õapprenticeshipö or while working with a hands-on leader towards a common endeavour. These skills, competences and know-how were not only technical but also social/relational, such as the ability to cooperate and stimulate cooperation, or a mix of technical and relational/social skills, such as the ability to engage in knowledge-sharing activities. It is the relationship with the owners/ leaders that strongly contributed to shaping team membersø identity in terms of a wide range of abilities. Workers not only acquired technical skills, but also constructed the identity of people who gladly shared knowledge (essential in CF teamwork), spent time with newcomers and helped colleagues to learn new work practices. This was favoured by having identified with someone who patiently taught the essentials of his job, by having been in this relationship for years and by engaging in work practice through social interaction, where workers were given time, attention and teaching, where they would be exposed to a specific meaning of work. The second key identity issue that can account for the different learning outcomes found in the field concerns commitment and how it was powerfully sustained by emotions and by nostalgic fantasies about the leaders. These leaders, during their working lives, had inspired their employees with their charismatic presence and were still able to do so today, despite being no longer physically present, through the nostalgic fantasy of that presence.

It is interesting to note here that leaders can be enabling or not, regardless of whether they are physically present. The CFT literature considers the influence of enablers only if they are physically present, but our study shows that fantasies of the leader are powerful and have real consequences, irrespective of his physical presence in the workplace. The symbolic, emotional, cognitive and pragmatic influence of the dead

leader when kept alive in fantasies (and in the narratives that perpetuate them) crosses the boundaries of life and death and assumes real, positive and/or negative qualities. One may recall here, for example, the pat on the back as a boosting fantasy facilitating the learning of CF teamwork for workers, and a looming spectre as inhibiting fantasy for managers. The consequences for employeesø identities were, of course, different. Following the analysis of the relevant narratives, I saw that for managers, this identity had a negative influence on their ability to learn and therefore to operate CFT practice, affecting this ability in various ways. First of all, for managers, being in a relationship with Mario meant not having the opportunity to take responsibility or to make decisions, jeopardizing those conditions that could have made cross-functional teamwork possible after his death. As noted in the case of the workers, the managers too were influenced by the fantasmatic presence of the leader, which did not, however, have an enabling role, but a predominantly disabling one. The negative memories and the introjected demanding father figure, which already inhabited and inhibited managers, were then rekindled by the Rossi familyøs current negative attitudes.

The literature presents commitment as a consequence of benevolent paternalistic leadership (Erben, 2008). What we add to this is that one needs to focus not only on significant others such as the paternalist leader per se, but also on the emotional embedded context where the relation with the leader is established, as this context has a longstanding impact on the identities (and activities) of the employees, because, for example, through the paternalistic relation employees develop a strong commitment to their working practices and to their company, with high levels of attachment and dedication to the firm. The emotional embedded context does not dissolve with the death of the leader; instead, fantasies, emotions and nostalgic feelings actualised in the

employeesø stories and narratives about their identity, the way they speak about themselves and others continue to reproduce the effects of the paternalist leadership.

Our study shows the strength and depth of the role that the fantasy of the leader plays in this emotional embedded context of employeesø identities. The introjection of the owners/leaders as parental figures, to be pleased and from whom to expect some kind of loving reward, even in fantasized surrogate versions of this relationship, produced in workers a great zeal towards the firm in general and towards the CFTs in particular. These findings underline the importance of intangible rewards reported by management studies of motivation. What they add is an exploration of how intangible rewards are constituted and from what they are derived. This kind of intangible reward is constituted in profound emotional and relational dynamics and derives from the fantasmatic investment in the very reward, following the paternal relationship with the leader. Identifying the constitution and derivation of such rewards allows us to understand their potentially strong motivational power and why they can be perceived as nourishing and encouraging.

The next section considers the second aspect of identity emerging from the findings, namely what is referred to above as social/regional identity.

8.2.3.2 *Northern Italian identity*

The findings presented in chapter 7 showed that another emerging identity issue able to influence the learning of the work practice in question was connected with being a worker from the North of Italy, described as a productive and õlabouristö situated context. Commitment emerged as culturally inscribed in the identity of workers from this part of Italy. I argued that this has implications for their commitment to CFTs, in

the sense that they would apply the same commitment to learning a new work practice such as CF teamwork. As to managers, since their commitment emerged as less visceral than that of the workers, I opted to limit this specific analysis concerning regional/local identity to the latter.

8.2.3.3 *Occupational identity: being a worker or a manager*

The final set of findings concerns another emerging aspect of team membersø identity, intersecting the local and regional dimensions: the identity derived from being a worker or a manager, understood in occupational terms. This specific identity affected an attitude found to be important in learning the CFT work practice: de-centring, which came at least in part from team membersø identity as workers, whereas being and working as a manager conversely made it more difficult to de-centre. Thus, from this last set of findings, it can be seen how social and contextual issues influenced team membersø identity and how such identity issues can consequently affect the learning of CFT practice. The next section continues to draw out the learning points, focusing on the theoretical and empirical contributions made by this thesis.

8.3 Theoretical and empirical contributions

8.3.1 Contribution to SLT

The first original contribution of my work concerns situated learning theory, especially with regard to its explanation of the learning of cross-functional team practice and the role of identity. My study sheds light on the relationship between learning and identity, specifically in the CFT context. As illustrated in the literature review chapters, SLT fails to consider how learning a practice in a CoP is also shaped by identities, as they are informed not only by what is going on within the community at the present moment, but also by what went on before and beyond the social, relational dimension occupied by

the community of practice. Therefore, this study advances the SLT notion of the importance of identity in learning, enriching the understanding of identity itself. In fact, I show how learning (in the context of CF teamwork) is affected by multi-faceted and complex aspects of identity that I have named relational, social & regional and occupational (see Fig. 8.2, p. 275). Indeed, the empirical chapters showed that the identity developed before and beyond a certain community of practice can affect participation in a different CoP.

To be precise, the contribution of my work is to have shown that identity affects learning in significant ways and not only, as is usually considered in SLT studies, that learning affects identity. In other words, what matters is not only how learning shapes or constructs identity but how this relationship is reciprocal and how identity also shapes learning. I have specifically highlighted the relational space where identities are constituted and maintained, which strongly influences learning. In the organization studied here, CarparCo, this relational and situated dimension has specific features, which I have described as a strongly paternalistic context. This has specific consequences first for identity and then for learning, as the analytical chapters showed and as was summarized in the previous section. In a later subsection (8.3.5), I conclude the discussion of the contribution to SLT by considering what emerged, in the last analytical chapter, as one of the important elements making the learning of CFT possible and successful: de-centring.

8.3.2 Contribution to paternalism and identity construction at work

The previous section, and in more detail chapter 6, showed how employeesø identity can be variously and profoundly affected by the relationship with a paternalistic leader. Broadening this discussion, it is appropriate to consider how the formation of

professional identity is influenced by working in a strongly paternalistic organization. Pratt et al. (2006: 238) note that the literature on the processes of identity at work õremains a loosely affiliated body of researchö. An individual entering an organization must decide who s/he wants to become and needs role models to identify with. Drawing on the findings presented in this study, I argue that working in a strongly paternalistic organization, even one where the father has died but where his image or fantasy continues to dominate all aspects of organizational life, helps employees to identify, to create an image of how to be at work.

Among the scholars who have looked at the importance of role models in identity construction at work are Ibarra (1999), Ashforth (2008) and Pratt (2000). According to Ibarra (1999), professional adaptation can be theorized in a three-task model of adaptation: observing role models, experimenting with provisional selves and evaluating results according to internal standards and external feedback. Adaptation is guided by a repertoire of possible selves and corresponding action strategies that people modify to varying degrees with experience. These repertoires include images of feasible, desired and feared identities in the new role, as well as the actual behavioural tools needed to signal those possibilities, e.g. attitudes, styles, self-presentation tactics, behavioural routines, language, demeanour and so on. Repertoires are augmented and elaborated as people observe role models and supply the elements needed to construct provisional selves. Early constructions are based on naive and sometimes discordant perceptions of role requirements and possible selves in the new role. With direct experience, people clarify what images are desirable and increase their understanding of what elements they can use to create those images. They evaluate identities against internal standards of self-congruence and external standards of appropriateness, then

modify repertoires accordingly: adding, discarding or revising the bits and pieces of their possible selves.

It is to be observed here that when an individual is socialized in a strongly paternalistic organization, the possible role models with which s/he can identify in order to create a professional identity are strictly limited. Thus, there may be little room for the observation and experimenting stages postulated by Ibarra in strongly paternalistic organizations, where there is sometimes only one role model available for identification. Besides, even when the founder/father has died and new leaders step in, they may not be perceived as role models, due to the enduring properties of the paternal fantasy explained above, so that the dead founding father and his fantasy constitute the only model to identify with. Furthermore, the psychodynamic reading of my ethnography suggests that the role model and the fantasy are never univocal and are not about real features of the leader, but what matters is the reality of the relationship each has with the leader and its features, which, as indicated in this case, can be quite different in workers and managers. Thus, it must be appreciated that a single fantasy can have contradictory aspects; in this case, it was benevolent and nurturing on one hand but authoritarian and impeding on the other.

In Ashforth¢s (2008) articulated model, organizations are considered to encourage enactment and provide feedback through sensebreaking and sensegiving, which are rooted in identity construction (Pratt, 2001; Weick, 1995). Sensebreaking õinvolves a fundamental questioning of who one is when one¢s sense of self is challenged ... [creating] a meaning void that must be filledö (Pratt, 2000: 464). In a strongly paternalistic context, it can be argued that sensebreaking might be less developed or very quickly filled by a sometimes overwhelming father-like presence. This is

especially so if the employees entered the work context when very young and when the sensebreaking stage was particularly marked and sensitive to sensegiving feedback. Sensegiving thus refers to attempts to guide the õmeaning construction of others toward a preferred redefinition of organizational realityö (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991: 442). In a strongly paternalistic context, organizational reality is very likely to be defined and redefined in terms of family bonds, imposing itself as the preferred definition; for instance, treating employees as children to be nurtured, thus creating an expectation of fatherly care and a desire for complacency. Sensebreaking and sensegiving often work in tandem: sensegiving serves as a response to sensebreaking, providing the organizationally sanctioned answers to the questions associated with identity deficits (Ashforth et al., 2008). A positive aspect of paternalistic organizational contexts might be that identity deficits are infrequent, allowing employees to enact their professional identities with confidence and possibly with performativity. On the other hand, limiting sensegiving to family bonds may be reductive, or indeed counterproductive, as we have seen to have been the case with managers at CarparCo. Ashforth (2008) suggests that while sensebreaking and sensegiving provide trajectories for action, individuals are still left with an array of potential actions, albeit narrower in a strongly paternalistic context. What happens when some employees find it difficult to come to terms with a specific predominant sensegiving? What are the implications for the situated learning of cross-functionality?

In their discussion of occupational and career identification, Ashforth et al. (2008) indicate that individuals may identify with multiple lociô including occupation and organizationô and cope with considerable latent conflict between identities. Individuals have differentiated identities and identifications in organizations, precisely because they

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are required to wear many hats (Ashforth et al., 2008). The findings, especially those presented in chapter 6, allow me to suggest that in the case of a paternalistic relationship also characterized by benevolence, the father figure and its subsequent fantasy can favour identity integration, thus reducing conflict between roles. The relationship with the father figure, when benevolent, can facilitate not only organizational continuity, but also individual internal unity over differentiation. Thus, thanks to this identity integration favoured by the paternalistic context/relationship, learning CF teaming can be made easier, since assuming functional and cross-functional roles does not represent a major source of conflict. This is also possible, as better explained in the next section, because identification with a paternalistic leader facilitates identification with the organization and hence with the CFT.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argue that organizational discourses and material arrangements affect identity construction, but identity is also crucial in organizing processes. There are work contexts where the predominant discourse, albeit not deliberately chosen, is that of paternalism, which can affect work practices and identity construction, while the ensuing identity can influence work practices. Successful identity work increases coherence and may act as a buffer against a threateningly diverse and ambiguous external world (cf. Dunne, 1996; McAdams, 1993). What happened at CarparCo indicates that a largely authoritarian and paternalistic organizational discourse does not help managers to construct a coherent professional identity, which in turn makes it more difficult to face the fragmentation of roles and tasks such as being head of a unit, member of a CFT focused on original equipment manufacturing and so forth.

The idea of anti-identity proposed by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003), concerning 'not-me' positions in relation to work situations and role expectations, stimulates a number of reflections with regard to paternalism. As identity constructions typically involve images and lively ideas around 'who I am' and 'what I am like', anti-identity metaphors are presumably an important part of identity work (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). Managers not identifying with the paternalistic discourse and all ensuing work situations may instead construct a concealed anti-identity as not-son or non-member of the family. At CarparCo, this anti-identity was not positive; in other words, it did not propose a clear counter-image or a counter-metaphor. It therefore had the effect of weakening the managers' professional identity, which inevitably affected their ability to learn how to work cross-functionally. What can be learnt from this is that one needs to be actively positive in order to be successful; that the lack of a unifying positive fantasy has negative consequences when one is constantly confronted with the continual relation with a negative one, as CarparCo managers were.

Besides, managers did not even rely on self-identity narratives as a point of continuity to face fragmentation (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003). In the case of a long-term and benevolent paternalistic relationship, such as that enjoyed by CarparCo workers, employees can rely on their self-identity narratives as "children" and safely navigate themselves and the organization through external and internal threats, such as the introduction of new work practices (in this case, CF teaming). This is possible because the nature of self-identity narratives is deeply personal and because, in the present case, personal and work-related factors certainly overlap.

Moreover, while the contemporary understanding of managers may be to exalt them as 'entrepreneurs', 'leaders', 'culture creators' or 'visionaries' (du Gay, 1996), much of

this talk seems to function, albeit vaguely, as input to more partial forms of identity work, rather than being closely related to any substantial managerial practice, potentially creating discrepancies between ideals and experienced practice, leading to frustration among many managers (Alvesson and Sveningsson, 2003). Drawing on my research, it is possible to argue that within contemporary organizations such as CarparCo, there can be two dominant discourses: a patent one, concerning managers as leaders and so forth, and a latent one, definable as paternalism. The latter, when authoritarian, can thwart the actualization of the former. It would appear, then, that paternalism can represent for identity both a stabilizer and an antidote to the ‒external∅ turbulence and fragmentation of the organizational world (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), also represented by the need to learn new practices, depending on whether it is polarized more towards benevolence or authoritarianism. As Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) point out, discourses, roles and narrative self-identities all are involved; they fuel and constrain identity work.

In conclusion, what is added here to Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) is that one of the organizational discourses affecting identity construction is paternalism and that a largely authoritarian paternalistic discourse does not aid managers to construct a coherent professional identity. Whilst Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) argue that anti-identity metaphors are an important part of identity work, for those managers not identifying with the paternalistic discourse, this anti-identity is not positive. However, one needs to be actively positive in order to be successful in constructing one∅s professional identity, which also affects the learning of a new work practice such as CFT, where the lack of a unifying positive fantasy has negative consequences. Self-identity narratives can help in facing fragmentation (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003); following a long-term

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benevolent paternalistic relationship, employees can rely on their self-identity narratives as ÷childrenø to handle fragmentation positively. Finally, paternalism can represent for identity both a stabilizer and an antidote to the ÷externalø turbulence and fragmentation of the organizational world (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003), depending on whether it is polarized more towards benevolence or authoritarianism.

8.3.3 Paternalism and (CF) team identification

An additional contribution arises from my attempt to unravel the complexity of identity as a multidimensional construct by considering the emerging conditions under which people are more likely to identify and resist identification with groups and organisations, and the role of identity issues in facilitating identification with work groups. Specifically looking at CFTs, Van der Vegt et al. (2005) consider membership of a team to be an emotionally significant aspect of identity, clearly supplying the õmotivational forceö leading to action or the readiness to engage in or disengage from interaction (Bergami and Bagozzi, 2000). These authors also report that in teams with high collective identification, expertise diversity was found to be positively related to team learning and performance, whereas when team identification was low, these relationships were negative. As to my findings, they showed that interaction with paternalistic leaders was highly influential in favouring the identification of workers with their CFTs and in making that identification more difficult for managers. The identity derived from paternalistic relationships can be characterized either by identification with the father figure and with the organization, by attachment and commitment to the leader and metonymically to the firm, or by ÷disidentificationø from the leader and the organization, by relatively weak attachment and commitment. The present study has shown that behind the identity derived from relationships with

paternalistic leaders lie powerful emotions motivating or inhibiting identification with the CFT and its goals, which is a fundamental prerequisite for satisfactorily learning and operating CF teamwork. Thus, what is added here to the work of Van der Vegt (2005) is that membership of a team is an emotionally significant aspect of identity also in connection with a paternalistic relationship experienced by team members. Besides, the motivational force supplied by this emotional significance can lead to a readiness to engage in or disengage from interaction, to identify with or disidentify from the CFT, depending on this paternalistic relationship being polarized more towards benevolence or authoritarianism.

8.3.4 Paternalism, emotions and learning

One of the challenges which this work has met at least in part is that of identifying ways of developing and deploying concepts of identity which are attractive across traditional social science boundaries. Insightful analyses of multiple kindsô social, psychological, psychodynamic and organisationalô have been offered (Brown, 2001) and related to learning in the specific context of cross-functional teams. My findings show that learning occurs primarily in the context of social relations and as a result of complex interactions, which are profoundly influenced by both individual and collective emotions. Emotion and learning in combination are powerful sources of meaning and direction, supporting or inhibiting individuals and organizations in their attempts to redefine reality and find their place in it (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001). My findings are therefore consistent with the work of Vince (2001), Antonacopolou and Gabriel (2001) and Gabriel and Griffiths (2002), who state that learning can be driven by an emotional agenda. However, although emotion is recognised as one of the factors affecting learning positively or negatively (Boud and Walker, 1993; Antonacopolou,

2000), our understanding of how emotion contributes to the learning process is limited. Emotion is often perceived as a negative factor and one that effectively should be controlled and even eliminated (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001).

My study contributes to this specific field of knowledge, indicating how emotions deriving from fantasies and memories linked to a paternalistic leader can affect individualsø ability to learn and in particular to learn a work practice such as cross-functional teaming. Psychoanalytic writers pay great attention to the relationship between the learner and the agent of learning, i.e. the teacher, mentor, consultant or clinician, who acts as the force facilitating and unleashing learning (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al, 1983; French, 1997). This relationship is shaped by transference and counter-transference, the complex and largely unconscious emotional forces which bind together student and teacher, practitioner and consultant, patient and analyst (Freud, 1912, 1986). Through transference, early feelings and images are redirected towards new figures of authority (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001). This thesis contributes to the existing literature by considering how the relationship with paternalistic leaders, where transference and counter-transference also occur, can affect the learning of cross-functional teaming, through emotions such as filial love, nostalgia or fear, what they are triggered byô fantasiesô and what they can trigger: motivation or inhibition.

An important psychoanalytic insight derives from the work of Winnicott (1962, 1980), who argues that learning takes place within a õholding environmentö, one allowing enough space for experimentation and play, which is safe enough without being stifling or overbearing. This holding environment recreates the experience of the motherøs embrace, which allows the child to realize that he/she has an independent existence in the world, yet without exposing him/her directly to the threats engendered by this world.

The management of anxiety then becomes seminal in all learning situations, since too much or too little anxiety inhibits learning (Gabriel and Griffiths, 2002). A point of theoretical novelty can be offered here by considering that a largely benevolent paternalistic relationship can represent the holding environment, where employees can learn through experimentation, with an acceptable and therefore motivating level of anxiety. Furthermore, it should be noted that the fantasies, nostalgic feelings and memories associated with this benevolently paternalistic holding environment can be extremely powerful in motivating learning, including the situated learning of CF teaming, even in the absence of the leader since his death. Conversely, a largely authoritarian paternalistic relationship can basically deny the holding environment, raising levels of anxiety too high, fuelled by inhibiting and lasting fears linked with the paternalistic leader and his fantasmatic presence. Thus, anxiety may be translated into fear if the individual feels inadequate, confused, powerless and helpless (Salzberger-Wittenberg et al, 1983), as in the case of an authoritarian paternalistic relationship, which is likely to inhibit learning (Carr, 1998). This includes the situated learning of CFT practice, where the relational and social components are prominent, possibly making this learning more sensitive to emotionality, as in the case of CarparCo's managers inhibited by fears and anxiety.

It should also be noted that in all organizations, expectations are handed up and down, consciously and unconsciously, through relations between individuals and between sub-systems, as well as through political processes of action and avoidance. Expectations can have a powerful impact on the ways in which organizational members feel about and do their jobs. This, in turn, shapes organizational habits and characteristics, creating õestablishedö ways of organizing (Vince, 2001). In a strongly paternalistic work

context, specifically characterized by authoritarianism, these expectations can play a remarkable role in inhibiting and stifling employeesø learning and operating. Such expectations can emanate not only from an external, demanding, rough father figure, but also from an internalized powerful one who requires compliance with expectations through fearful fantasies and memories. Thus, a significant departure of psychoanalysis from other approaches concerns the relative imperviousness of certain emotions to learning (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001). Whilst acknowledging that anxiety is an important element in understanding how learning both occurs and is prevented (Schein, 1993; Vince, 1996), it is now possible to add equally relevant emotions, such as fear, nostalgia and others related to fantasy.

While anxiety is an emotion playing a determining role in learning, the contrasting cases of workers and managers certainly allow us to affirm that a possibly greater role is played by love (see Freire, 1996). Learning under the guidance of a loved teacher or a respected manager is different from learning in the presence of a hated teacher or a cynical supervisor. Learning as part of an exciting group is different from learning in a group riven with rivalries and acrimony. Learning in an organization which allows experimentation, innovation and failure is different from learning in one that values tradition, obedience and avoidance of failure at all costs (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001). By the same token, learning in a benevolent paternalistic context is very different from learning in an authoritarian context, just as the traces left by having loved or feared such a leader will differ. As happened for CarparCo managers, it is not the case that cynical managers, acrimonious groups, defensive organizationsô or, I would add, authoritarian paternalistic leadersô discourage learning. Far from it. What they do is to encourage a kind of learning that promotes defensive attitudes, conservatism and

destruction of all new ideas as potentially threatening and subversive (Gabriel and Griffiths, 2002). Things like defensiveness can, in emotional embedded contexts like the one discussed here, be very difficult to unlearn or to recover from, making new, good learning more difficult. This also applies, of course, to the situated learning of a work practice such as cross-functionality, where openness, knowledge sharing, self-confidence and decision-making skills are paramount.

Thus, the need to encourage individuals within organizations to understand their emotions and to employ them constructively in their daily lives is one point on which psychoanalytic and other current accounts of emotions converge. Supporting individuals in gaining emotional understanding of themselves and others is seen as a vital part of organizational learning (Mangham, 1998; Antonacopolou, 1998). Learning about one's emotions provides a useful starting point for recognising what causes these emotions and how they may be worked on, reconciled and corrected. This in itself is the first step to freedom, moving on to a new state of acting, behaving and being (Antonacopolou and Gabriel, 2001). Overall, my study contributes to this specific field of knowledge, showing that learning is also driven by emotions and indicating how emotions deriving from fantasies and memories linked to a paternalistic leader can affect individuals' ability to learn and to learn cross-functional teamwork. The influence on learning can be positive and the associated emotions are love and nostalgia in the case of a benevolent leader; but the influence can be negative and the emotions are inhibiting fears and spectres in the case of an authoritarian leader.

8.3.5 De-centring

Discussing the findings presented in the central chapters, I have been looking at what this thesis adds to knowledge of the learning of cross-functionality, specifically from a

situated learning perspective, examining how CFT practice is learnt and identifying the crucial role in this learning process played by identity and its construction. What was found to be important in relation to team members' identity and its construction was the emotional and relational space in which they lived their daily work lives. This space has been characterized as strongly paternalistic, with a number of implications as discussed in the sections above. Another important issue which has emerged as able to affect the situated learning of cross-functionality is de-centring. From the narratives analyzed, it is possible to suggest that the learning of CF teaming also comes from the ability when necessary to put aside oneself, one's views and one's interests, even functional ones. De-centring can strengthen team performance and the achievement of team goals; it favours team identification and therefore team success. It can encourage greater involvement and motivation, thus in reality augmenting control, but a more creative and detached form of control, made possible by the team, which should work as an insulator from self-centred drives.

Chapter 7 showed how a specific, situated working-class identity is linked to a certain work ethos which favours de-centring. It is possible to argue that working in a strongly paternalistic organization gives workers a further opportunity to exercise de-centring, where a strong father figure constantly invites filial trust and submission. De-centring, however, is here theorized and acknowledged as having strong emotional and pragmatic repercussions on learning cross-functionality in teamwork and not only the cognitive ones suggested by Maznevski and Di Stefano (2000). Also, mobilizing SLT conceptual categories, it could be argued that in order for a newcomer to become a full member of a CFT (equated here to a CoP),[7] taking a full part in the practice, it is extremely helpful

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[7] See chapter 2 for an explanation of why and how a CFT can be equated to a CoP.

to be able to de-centre from such things as self-affirmation drives, individualistic and personal interests, functional interests and ingrained ways of working. A model can therefore be theorized where learning CF teamwork occupies a central position and its satisfactory achievement depends on a positive de-centring relationship which is compounded of three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and pragmatic (Fig. 8.3).
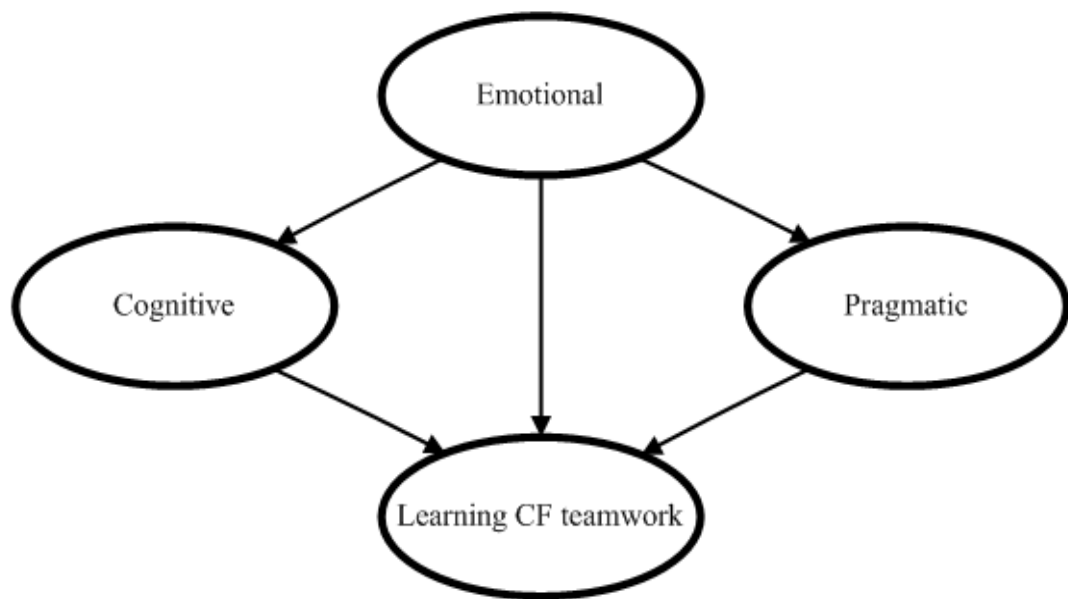
Fig. 8.3: Dimensions of de-centring

In this model, the emotional dimension in some sense fuels the other two; in other words, if team members can put aside self-centred drives, they can then more easily put aside ingrained ways of working (pragmatic) and assume their teammatesø perspectives (cognitive). For learning CF teaming it becomes paramount to activate these three dimensions; the exclusion of one or more of them can jeopardize this very learning. The model offers a useful indication to practitioners because it reminds them that factors impinging on learning cross-functional teamwork are not only cognitive, but also emotional and pragmatic; therefore each of these needs to be carefully considered and actively managed.

8.3.6 Some other theoretical and empirical contributions

Having discussed the main contribution arising from the findings presented in this thesis, this section considers how the promises made and challenges raised throughout the initial chapters have been addressed. In chapter 2, after considering the CFT literature, I advocated an approach more able to problematise the roles and the associative influences of stage-setting elements, enablers, team behaviours and barriers, which the literature, describable as functionalist, had defined as complex. The interpretative stance assumed in this study indeed allowed an improved understanding of CF teaming, through an exploration of specific emerging identity issues which highlighted the crucial effect of the social, economic, geographical and historical situated context on the meanings that people attach to relationships, to work and to how they learn it. It is important to note that these identity issues would have remained largely invisible to a functionalist scrutiny as proposed by the mainstream CFT literature, which offers insufficient consideration of the situated embedded context and which is less open to emerging issues and more to predefined propositions. A further limitation concerning the functionalist approach of the existing CFT literature is that its perspective is managerial, i.e. it considers only the point of view of management as a neutral technique (Townley, 2001; Parker, 2002). Assuming the employeesø perspective facilitated access to interesting explanations such as those in relation to subjectsø emotional elaborations of their relationships with the leaders as significant others.

Early in this study, in chapter 2, I argued that by looking at the issues intervening positively or negatively in the learning of cross-functional teamwork, it might be possible to achieve a deeper, more textured understanding of CFT dynamics. The investigation and analysis carried out, asking whether CF teamwork had been learnt and

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why or why not, actually led to the identification of unexplored issues concerning identity which affect the learning of this work practice. In this way, something has been added to the existing body of knowledge concerning CFT, which does not consider relational, social or contextual issues, such as the roles of fears, inhibitions and fantasies ensuing from paternalistic relationships with the leaders, or of commitment associated with a specific meaning of work attached to a local/regional identity, to mention only a few of the issues emerging from the analysis.

Furthermore, given that the situated learning literature makes surprisingly little explicit reference to theories of identity construction (Handley et al., 2006) and that I needed more developed theoretical tools to make sense of the data, I adopted a conceptualization of identity, derived by tapping into theories of identity, which had not yet been developed in SLT. It has been shown that this conceptualization is consistent with SLT and that it represents a useful theoretical development in this area of study. However, while representing a theoretical contribution, this conceptualization of identity also constitutes an avenue for further theoretical development. My research project did not in fact begin as a theorization of identity in general, but this became a concern once I began research in the field and when I interacted with the theories regarding situated learning and cross-functional teamwork.

Another key theoretical contribution in addressing identity in CF teamwork is represented by the emergence of new and unexplored identity issues. The literature on CFTs to date lacks consideration of how identity, other than functional identity (i.e. that derived from working in a certain organizational unit) can affect CF teamworking in general and the learning of this practice in particular.

Finally, the literature review chapter reported that the full performance potential of CFTs is not always realized (Webber, 2002) and that there are mixed results as to whether heterogeneity amongst team members facilitates or hinders effective performance (Cohen and Bailey, 1998). It has been legitimately asked what is suggested by these contradictory research findings and gaps, and why the literature seems to find it so difficult to come to terms with these conflicting results. Certainly, it can be argued that the understanding of CFTs is far from complete. It has also been argued that a different, non-functionalist, approach to such issues would provide better explanations not only of the contradiction in research outcomes, but also of the very effectiveness or ineffectiveness of CFTs.

CFTs can indeed be considered a good means of pursuing effectiveness, but it must be recognized that the complexity and quantity of organizational and individual issues mean that it is practically impossible to predict whether a certain CFT will work well or not. It is therefore pointless to attempt to establish once and for all whether or not CF teaming will bring performance improvements, since this will depend on numerous factors such as those linked to identity and to its situated embedded context, as discussed in this study. The functionalist approach aims to offer definitive answers to such questions and probably finds it hard to accept the uncertainty of an answer which is not clear cut, whereas the interpretative approach is better able to tolerate contradictions and uncertainties and to accept that human beings are essentially free and therefore capable of diverse responses to the different life or work situations which they encounter; that they are, as suggested, unitary selves with many identity facets where ambiguity, paradox and contradiction coexist with a tendency towards unity.

8.4 Methodological contribution

The methodological account of this research in chapter 4 was completed by a consideration of the disability (blindness) of the researcher/ethnographer. This section discusses what can be learnt in methodological terms, both theoretical and practical. One rather obvious methodological question which arises is how a blind person should conduct ethnographic research when a commonsense definition of ÷observationø would presuppose the ability to see events (Wheeler, 2004). A common thread which runs through many discussions of ethnography is indeed the demand placed on ethnographers to be visually aware of their surroundings and observe social interactions as they occur (Baszanger & Dodier, 1997; Coffey, 1999; Denscombe, 1999; Gonzalez, 2000; King, 1996; Marshall & Rossman, 1989). The first point to make in response is that research topics and research sites differ in the ease with which they lend themselves to being researched by a blind ethnographer. Something to take into consideration is the extent to which a certain research site allows the blind researcher to be fully immersed in interactions amongst members and how free the environment is from elements of disturbance such as overwhelming noise which could prevent him/her from hearing participantsø voices clearly. That said, although I agree with Wheeler (2004) that it is possible to argue that the visual does not necessarily provide an accurate representation of events, I do not agree with his assertion that accounts provided by blind researchers can be considered as valid as any other (Wheeler, 2004). Blind people can adjust and compensate, but in my view it would be wrong to claim that it is just the same as if one could see. There are instances where sight is necessary and where other senses cannot compensate. Sight is the only sense of the five we have that allows a global view, in other words to perceive and acquire information, and therefore knowledge, synoptically and synchronically. The other four senses, defined in chapter 4 as residual in a blind

person, work in a sequential manner; in other words, when a new piece of information is acquired, the perception of the information acquired earlier weakens. Blind people try to compensate for this drawback with memory, which is, however, more volatile than the synoptic perception.

The second consideration is that although sighted people, including researchers and ethnographers, are able to see, they can be unable to capture what is meaningful and beyond the scene observed. Wheeler (2004) refers to the õproblemö of a reliance on sight, which can produce an illusion of objective reality and which is not completely ignored in methodology texts. My contention is not only that sighted researchers may not be able to make fruitful use of what they see in terms of understanding, but also that the knowledge provided by the senses other than sight has as much claim to objective reality as that provided by sight. The fact that sighted peopleô including researchersô rely particularly heavily on this sense does not mean that the remaining four are unable to do their job in granting access to the world. This problematic relationship to the visual has been recognised by Hughes (1999:160-61), who argues against formulations that promote ocularcentric beliefs such as to see is to knowø where a reliance on the visual creates a myth, a clouding of interpretation, as it would stop interpretation too soon.

As pointed out in chapter 4, it would be far beyond the scope of this doctoral thesis to establish fundamental truths about the epistemology of the five senses; however, a few reflections may contribute to the methodological debate in this regard. It can be expected that for a blind person and researcher, the visual does not coincide with the observational; otherwise not only research but life itself would for the blind person be excessively frustrating and demotivating, because of the impression that what is

perceived is not reliably real, where ─reliably real∅ is understood in terms of access to a certain stability and therefore predictability. On the contrary, the knowledge of reality, including social reality, that a blind person is able to gather can allow a proper, in other words effective, interaction with individuals and things, leading to a satisfactory quality of life andô in case of a blind researcherô to a satisfactory research outcome.

This is not to claim that sight can be completely substituted or to deny that blind people sometimes simply cannot grasp aspects of reality which are only graspable through sight; it simply means that after many years of being blind one learns to get the most out of it. This leads to a third consideration specifically related to the status of the blind researcher. Blind people are normally accustomed to putting in place strategies of compensation for the lack of visual information. Thus, while sighted people may tend to rely heavily on sight, using their other senses to a lesser degree, blind people are trained by life to make a more refined use of the so-called residual senses such as hearing, touch and smell, or indeed of intuition, of being in a state of alertness. So, for instance, from the voices of the people on a research site a blind researcher can infer their moods; from his or her way of speaking the blind ethnographer can infer whether a person is insecure. The visually impaired researcher can also detect the direction of the interlocutorøs voice, allowing her/him to judge, for example, that an interviewee is looking down, which could be a sign of unease, embarrassment or disengagement, which in turn might affect the choice of what questions to pose next and how. Gestures which can be heard, such as clicking a pen or tapping on the desk, can also be very meaningful. Another interesting source of information can come from paying attention to how people breathe: if they take deep and anxious breaths, if they snort, if they hold their breath whilst speaking. This is more easily acknowledged during interviews where

the interaction is sufficiently long and held in an environment without background noise.

The residual senses do not substitute for sight, but they enhance and compensate for it. Of course, it is possible to be mistaken in one's interpretation of a piece of sensorial data, so one should not rush to conclusions; whenever possible, a cross-check should be made using other sources of information such as the content of conversations or by asking specific questions of key informants. Besides, sighted researchers can surely be aided in their analysis by paying attention to body language, which is almost entirely precluded to blind researchers, although they do, in certain conditions as indicated above, have some limited access to body language. As such, it might be argued that the blind researcher misses valuable information. However, it could also be argued that body language can be learnt by individuals, hence any interpretations may be deliberately influenced by research subjects (Richardson, 1996).

Although traditional conceptions of the research process appear to accept uncritically the idea that visual observation provides accounts which reflect objective reality, it has been shown that it is possible to argue that the visual does not necessarily provide an accurate representation of events (Wheeler, 2004). At the same time, independent of the visual accuracy in representing events, the trustworthiness of the knowledge provided by the other four senses is not, in my view, questionable. Consequently, accounts provided by blind researchers can also be regarded as dependable.

Finally, a contribution to the methodological literature can be offered by reflecting upon the extent to which a blind researcher can manage differences. 'Good' ethnographic research is often done when the researcher minimises any perceived 'differences'

between her/himself and the research subjects (Coffey, 1999; Denscombe, 1999; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995). The purpose of reducing such differences is to engender trust and confidence on the part of research subjects. The identity of the researcher therefore needs to be managed. Strategies for managing identities, also accessible to blind researchers, include dressing appropriately and adopting the local vocabulary in order to reduce the status of researcher and become an ‑insider‑ (Denscombe, 1999; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Jorgensen, 1985; Mason, 1996). However, the extent to which blind ethnographic researchers can reduce their distance from their subjects and manage their identity must be considered (Wheeler, 2004). Any mention of a blind researcher in the methodological literature is as a marginal consideration (e.g. Barnes, 2003; Campbell & Oliver, 1996; Oliver, 1992; Zarb, 1997), while it is absent from most of the canon. Coffey and Denscombe make no reference to how their advice affects researchers other than those who are sensorially and physically able. The ability of a blind researcher to adopt a õmanaged identityö and to blend unobtrusively into and move around most research settings is severely restricted (Wheeler, 2004). Whilst agreeing with Wheeler (2004) that in such research, blindness is an integral component of the self which cannot be ‑shaken off‑ in order to adopt a managed identity complete with sight, it is also possible to argue that blindness as a difference can become a resource. When well managed, blindness, like other personal characteristics, can become an advantage and a key to open many doors. For instance, when such an impairment is lived in a reasonably relaxed and self-confident manner, it is possible to approach people with spontaneity and to make them feel at ease in the presence of a disability which might otherwise generate embarrassment. When this is combined with a polite, breezy manner and reasonably intelligent conversation where differences but also similarities emerge, the outcome on the abled side can be a pleasant

puzzlement and an almost unconscious inclination to trust. Even practical impediments, such as needing an escort in the research setting, can be turned into a further opportunity to build rapport and collect data.

In conclusion, it is possible to assert that blind researchers can satisfactorily compensate for their lack of sight, reaching a position where they do not need much visual information, where they collect and interpret enough data to draw sensible conclusions. As argued by Wheeler (2004), it is possible to finally assert that the inability to see does not preclude researchers from conducting ethnographic studies.

8.5 Concluding remarks

This final chapter of the thesis has presented a discussion of the findings and of the theoretical and empirical implications arising from those findings. At the beginning of the chapter, I proposed answers to the research questions which led this work. The answer to the first one suggested that for CarparCo workers, CF teamwork was implemented successfully, as they learnt and reproduced the CFT practice. The managers, by contrast, never implemented CF teamworking successfully and their CFT never became a significant part of their working practice. Consideration of the second research question showed that three identities emerged as having had a significant influence on the process of learning the CF teamwork practice: the relational identity derived from the relationship with the leaders, the social/regional identity connected with being a worker from the North of Italy and the occupational identity connected with being a worker or a manager. Examining the third research question with regard to relational identity and paternalism, the emotional and relational embedded context emerged as playing a role in facilitating or impeding the learning of cross-functionality. More specifically, a number of identity issues were discussed.

As to socio-regional identity, commitment emerged as culturally inscribed in the identity of workers from the North of Italy. I argued that this has implications for their commitment to CFTs, in the sense that they would apply the same commitment to learning a new work practice such as CF teaming. Occupational identity was found to affect an attitude important in learning the CF teamwork practice: de-centring.

Having answered the three research questions, the chapter continued with a discussion of a number of theoretical and empirical implications of the findings. The contribution to SLT was to show that identity is relational and situated, and that what matters is not only how learning shapes or constructs identity but how this relationship is reciprocal; in other words, how identity also shapes learning. Through a discussion of the work of various authors, the contribution to paternalism and identity construction at work highlighted how the formation of professional identity is influenced by working in a strongly paternalistic organization. As to paternalism and (CF) team identification, discussion of the existing literature led me to assert that membership of a team is an emotionally significant aspect of identity also in connection with a paternalistic relationship experienced by team members. Besides, the motivational force supplied by this emotional significance can lead to readiness to engage in or disengage from interaction, to identify with or disidentify from the CFT, depending on this paternalistic relationship being polarized more towards benevolence or authoritarianism. With regard to paternalism, emotions and learning, this thesis has contributed in showing that learning is also driven by emotions and in indicating how emotions deriving from fantasies and memories linked to a paternalistic leader can affect individualsø ability to learn and to learn cross-functional teamwork. An interesting contribution concerned de-centring; it was shown how the good learning of CF teaming also comes from de-

centring, theorized here in a model whereby for the learning of CF teamworking it becomes paramount to activate three dimensions: cognitive, emotional and pragmatic. The last contribution was methodological: it was concluded that blind researchers can, through different strategies, satisfactorily compensate for their lack of sight and that inability to see does not preclude researchers from conducting ethnographic studies.

A first broad concluding remark is that, throughout this thesis, identity has emerged as deeply relational, shaped by relations with other individuals, with the cultural context and with social and work roles. Similarly, learning, especially that of work practices, emerged as strongly relational. This reflection invites consideration of the extent to which this deeply relational dimension of identity and of learning is nowadays taken into account in theorizing and in practising CF teamwork. Arising from these considerations of identity is a reflection concerning the philosophical anthropological underpinning of scholarsø theorizing and practitionersø running of firms. Do scholars and practitioners sufficiently reflect upon their philosophical anthropological views? Are they aware that these significantly affect their ways of investigating and of practising?

What can also be concluded from the reflections presented in this chapter is the important role played in the learning process by identity in its relational, social and contextual aspects. Personal histories, composed of relations and identifications, also connected with the organizational, social, economic and geographic situated context, can have a powerful influence on individualsø ability to learn and to learn the practice of working cross-functionally. In particular, the fact that certain identity issues emerged at least in part from the identity derived from relationships with significant othersô in this specific case paternalistic relationshipsô draws attention to the importance of

relationships. The influence of relationships with significant others at work is itself significant, as we have seen, whether these relationships are positively or negatively polarized. It may be concluded that relationships and the emotional relational embedded context can have a strong influence not only on learning but also on productivity and performance within CFTs. This calls, in my view, for a greater consideration of the importance to CFTs of relationships, including their emotional and unconscious aspects, whether in theorizing about cross-functional teamwork, researching it or practising it.

Furthermore, this study highlighted the importance of contextual issues whose specificities need to be taken into account when approaching and planning new ways of working such as cross-functionality. For example, one of the characteristics of the study context investigated was paternalism, which had a series of implications, as illustrated in this chapter. Practitioners intending to implement cross-functionality in a firm should perhaps ascertain whether paternalism is present, whether it is more oriented towards benevolence or authoritarianism and thus whether before embarking on the setting up of CFTs, preparatory or alternative interventions are needed. The crucial role of relational and contextual issues which emerged warns against excessive standardizing and massifying tendencies, both in theorizing organizational studies and in implementing organizational practices. Acknowledging specificities means recognizing and taking on, for example, employeesø emotionality, their possible wounds and their distinct local work ethos. A final open question may therefore be posed: To what extent today are the specificities of employees and their social and work contexts acknowledged and valued in academic circles and in managerial practices, especially in connection with learning a work practice such as CF teamwork? Guarding against both particularism and homologation, it is suggested here that a greater consideration of individual and

contextual specificities in research and in practice may lead to more appropriate and effective managerial practices, and eventually to more humanized and humanizing work. Taking up the recent invitation of Pope Francis to the Catholic Church to guard against being closed and therefore in danger of being self-referential, I end this reflection with a quotation taken not from the existing organisational studies literature to which Anglo-American academia would normally refer, but from an Encyclical Letter of John Paul II:[8] õWe must emphasize and give prominence to the primacy of man in the production process, the primacy of man over things.ö

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[8] Laborem Exercens, Encyclical Letter, John Paul II, 14 September 1981.

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Appendix: Interview transcripts

Guido Luraghi

1) C: Come pensa che stia andando il team?

I: L'assetto un po' di tutto il gruppo si è evoluto ... in maniera direi molto positiva. Perché si era partiti con un'idea molto... limitata e settoriale, territoriale della materia e con il passare del tempo, ho visto un'evoluzione nei vari settori. Per quanto riguarda quello tecnico, ho visto... nella fattispecie acquisti, acquisire molta più conoscenza tecnica ... rispetto alla partenza. Magari alcune domande che mi venivano fatte ... ripetutamente sui disegni, ora li capisce immediatamente senza più chiedermi. Quindi ho visto ... ho visto questo. Una cosa che sono molto contento è ... il sistema di approccio che ho avuto con qualità. Anche lì siamo cresciuti parecchio in questo... in questo tempo. Sia da parte di ufficio tecnico è venuto molto incontro alle esigenze che aveva la qualità. Quindi, magari, ... riportare informazioni sul disegno che prima eravamo un po' restii perché lo ritenevamo un po' una perdita di tempo, ora abbiamo capito l'utilità di queste informazioni, quindi ci viene molto più spontaneo metterle. E viceversa, ho visto molta più... predisposizione , da parte della qualità, a prendere per buono quello che passa ufficio tecnico, ma controllare in maniera,... diciamo... maggiore rispetto a quello che viene richiesto a loro.

Giacomo Precisi

2) C: Cosa le sembra di poter dire di questi quasi due anni di lavoro in team?

I: Allora, dunque, di poter dire, sicuramente che è una roba coinvolgente e che ti dà un attimino di carica anche a cooperare. Perché, mentre prima si era ognuno,

bene o male, diciamo, í confinati nel proprio orticello senza interagire, oppure si interagiva solo per... motivi, diciamo così, tra virgolette, straordinari o eccezionalií adesso si è proprio partecipi, si sente proprio di toccare con le mani quello che si sta facendo anche a livello di prodotto nuovo e di tante altre cose. Perché sono coinvolti vari enti, quale progettazione che porta avanti i suoi studi eccetera. Ha dei metodi di studio che prima, diciamo non è che le notizie fossero confinate, ma prima di riuscire ad avere uno scambio, diciamo, libero di informazioni, era, í eraí un pochettino più stringato. Invece adesso, no. Per lømor di Dio, è coinvolgente.

Simone Guidotti

3) C: I team di industrializzazione hanno avuto un impatto sul suo modo di lavorare? Se sì, quale?

I: Sul mio lavoro hanno avuto un impatto diciamo marginale, eh ... nel senso che spesso le questioni tra virgolette banali, possono venire disputate e sistemate direttamente all'interno del team senza far rimbalzare in giro per l'azienda domande strane. ... e quindi evitano che domande strane comincino a rimbalzare per l'azienda ... perché poi alla fine generano soltanto perdite di tempo e basta. Per cui un impatto, sebbene abbastanza limitato sul mio lavoro, l'hanno avuto.

C: E le interazioni, contatti con le altre funzioni, da parte sua, prima e dopo, sono aumentate, diminuite? Migliorate, peggiorate?

I: I contatti con le mie altre funzioni sono diminuiti, nel senso che io ho meno bisogno di parlare con gli altri enti aziendali perché, proprio perché tutte le questioni anche più banali anziché rimbalzare su di me che poi io devo andare a

cercare l'informazione a destra e a manca, vengono chiuse all'interno del team di industrializzazione per cui evitano di passare attraverso i capi di funzione, responsabili di reparto, eccetera che devono far girare le cose. Per cui da un certo punto di vista sono diminuite le frequenze di contatto che io ho con gli altri enti aziendali, ma quando io telefono agli altri enti aziendali sono per questioni di maggior conto. No? Quindi questioni magari più legate a o una strategia di sviluppo, o a un qualcosa che non sia la banalità dello sviluppo di un singolo particolare di un progetto, ma un qualcosa di un pochino più corposo, piuttosto che l'organizzazione di una riunione per vedere delle questioni più spesse e quindi da questo punto di vista qui sì, sono leggermente cambiati anche i miei rapporti nei confronti degli altri enti aziendali.

Ottavio Rubini

4) C: Cosa ne pensa del motivo per cui sono stati avviati i team di industrializzazione qui inCarparCo?

I: Per migliorare. Perché anche lì quanto a giunti omocinetici, non avendo un ufficio tecnicoí che gestiva tutti i particolari nuovií allora, arrivava un giunto, la qualità faceva dei rilievií del pezzo, veniva fatto un disegno e poi il sottoscritto doveva seguire a fare tutte le attrezzature, portare avanti tutto il discorso. Non è così semplice. Avendo anche alle spalle un reparto da gestire. Se facendo così cₒè un team che segue tutti i problemi, molto meglio. Sono alleggerito e in più il mio pensiero viene diviso in più persone. Da tante idee nasce í qualcosa di serio. Ma da una persona sola più o meno il prodotto è sempre quello. Viene un prodotto molto migliore, in meno tempo, e tutto è sotto controllo.

Guido Luraghi

5) C: Gli altri ci tengono, secondo te, al team? Non solo ad esserne membri, ma proprio al team?

I: Sì. Sì, sì, sì. Sì vedoí Savelli una persona che conta molto sul team. Più e più volte abbiamo fatto delle í riunioni non da team di industrializzazione, ma per risolvere dei problemi che lui ha esposto ha chiesto la partecipazione del gruppo. Quindi, questo è un indizio. Cøè stato detto che dobbiamo farlo, allora una volta al mese ci troviamo. Penso che sia un poø questo ilí risultato finale per vedere se funziona o meno il team. Finché te lo impone løazienda, tra virgolette, lo sai. Hai la riunione al mese. Vuoi o non vuoi la fai. Quando inizi a slegarti da questo e inizi a dire: õCavoli, mi è saltato fuori questo problemaí ö, anziché perderci una giornata io, provo a sentire anche cosa ne pensa lui. Quindi si lavora a team e lo risolviamo magari in poche ore. Si ha la tendenza a fare così.

Antonino Corti

6) C: Come prendete le decisioni durante le riunioni?

I: Sì. Diciamo che, løaltro problema grosso che cøera alløinterno di questo team qua era Giacomo Precisi e Pierino Buffetti. Cioè sono due teste totalmente diverse e hanno due idee totalmente diverse. Il fatto di averle fatte sedere allo stesso tavolo e avere lo stesso obiettivo, un poø ha calmato gli animií Il fatto che cøè un obiettivo comune e ci sono gli occhi di tutta løazienda puntati su questo obiettivo, per cui uno magari lascia ancheí lascia un poø a parte magari, non il contrasto, però se voleva avere sempre løultima parola su una certa cosa, magari adesso si lascia anche fare, si riesce un attimino ad arrivare ad una

soluzione assieme. Magari prima prendevi in mano il telefono "Ho fatto questa riunione qua, è tutto sbagliato, digli a quello là". Allora magari lì serviva il mediatore. Mentre invece con queste riunioni qua, sei lì tutti assieme, si riesce a svicolare la cosa. Smussano un pochettino. Prima magari non l'avrebbero fatto. Almeno fino adesso le decisioni sono state prese proprio in una maniera pacifica. Cosa che invece, tipo l'altr'anno, "Ma devo fare questa quota piuttosto che quest'altra", ognuno voleva dire la sua.

Giacomo Precisi viene da un'esperienza penso trentennale qua dentro. Mentre invece Pierino Buffetti è un bel po' di meno. Però ha a disposizione degli strumenti totalmente innovativi. Cioè, nel senso, CAD, AutoCAD. Per cui non ha l'esperienza ma ha questi qua che con questi qua riesce comunque a trovare una soluzione. Quello là magari l'aveva fatto con l'esperienza, questo qua con la tecnologia. Però dovrebbero arrivare allo stesso punto. Quando questo punto qua non è, non è concorde, c'è un attimino di contrasto, però alla fine, o da una parte o dall'altra, si va senza troppi capigliamenti vari. Anzi, cose che magari uno prima, secondo me prima si impuntava sulla propria idea anche se poteva andare bene quella dell'altro, qua invece, diciamola per finirla fuori, per dirla proprio terra terra, se sono tutte e due valide se ne prende una lì assieme e basta.

Alvise Ronchi

7) C: Cosa mi dice del team Auto?

I: Mah, per me, il team Auto ... diciamo che sta vivendo ancora una fase abbastanza embrionale. In quanto ... la conoscenza del prodotto sta iniziando ad

essere portata, ad altre funzioni, tra cui la mia, in quanto sono partite due attività che hanno appunto questo scopo e la definizione della design e della process FMEA. Dove, in entrambi i casi, si esamina i possibili modi di guasti del prodotto e si vede cosa si sta facendo ora, o quello che si dovrà fare per evitare questi modi di guasto. Quindi, con questo, con questo... approccio che è appunto multifunzionale, diciamo che si sta iniziando a travasare le informazioni, si comincia a prendere un pochettino corpo quello che è il progetto. Solo che in questo momento abbiamo ancora delle attività in corso in ambito molto stretto di ricerca e sviluppo. Dove le altre funzioni, in questo momento, diciamo non riescono a ad essere informate in tempo reale su quelle che potrebbero essere sia i successi che i fallimenti che si stanno magari verificando su determinate prove specifiche che ricerca e sviluppo sta portando avanti. Sono dei test che simulano il funzionamento del prodotto, però chiamiamoli, tanto per capirci, dei pretest. Perchè li chiamo "pretest"? Perché a fronte appunto di questi risultati potrebbero intervenire delle modifiche sul prodotto, come daltronde sono anche avvenute. Tutta questa conoscenza di quello che sta avvenendo su questi test non è molto trasparente. E, di conseguenza, questo, secondo me, va a rendere meno robusto o significativo il contributo che le altre funzioni danno come proprio contributo alla definizione appunto della

design e della process. Perché se tutto lo staff sta lavorando per definire la design e la process, avesse, non dico la stessa conoscenza in maniera approfondita di quello che è successo durante i test, perché í   in termini di risorse non è che uno può dedicare la stessa risorsa che la ricerca sta dedicando su questo progetto. Ma, di avere dei flash, delle informazioni, cheí   ma anche sintetiche, in cui si fa il punto della situazione ericevere magari un succo di

quello che, o un estratto di quello che potrebbe essere l'analisi che l'ente ricerca e sviluppo ha condotto su questi test, le altre funzioni si sarebbero senz'altro arricchite sia degli aspetti positivi introdotti, sia anche di aspetti negativi che si sono verificati durante questi pretest, e, con questa ulteriore conoscenza, ripeto, sarebbe stato, secondo me, più robusto í e più significativo il contributo delle altre funzioni nella realizzazione di questi due documenti, che tra l'altro il cliente chiede e dobbiamo chiaramente realizzare, che sono proprio quelli che analizzano i possibili modi di guasto. Quindi, se attraverso dei pretest io vedo, ho capito che sostanzialmente mi si è guastato il prodotto, a fronte magari di un'analisi molto approfondita, ma almeno mi arriva l'informazione di sintesi: õAbbiamo provato il pezzo in queste condizioni. E' fallito dopo x ore. Abbiamo pensato, abbiamo capito che il fallimento è derivato da questo componente. Stiamo operando la variazione geometrica o di materiale di questo componente e pianificheremo nuovamente questo testö. Quindi, a questo punto, se chi lavora alla realizzazione di questi documenti ha anche questa informazione molto sintetica ma ben focalizzata nella propria testa, secondo il mio punto di vista, risulterebbe molto più propositivo il contributo.

C: Perché secondo lei non si sta facendo questa cosa?

I: E non lo so. Cioèí Io so benissimo che l'ingegner Rossi ha chiesto espressamente al responsabile della ricerca e sviluppo di tenerci informati. Però probabilmente è perché c'è stata, ripeto, una forte attività, un lavoro veramente grande perché all'inizio era un lavoro completamente nuovo e mi rendo conto della difficoltà e tutto il lavoro che è stato fatto. Quindi, questo che è, va sempre nell'ottica del lavoro interfunzionale dove su già attività consolidate dove non

c'è particolare, chiamiamola frenesia, o la necessità di andare a scoprire cose nuove, già facciamo fatica a lavorare un po' interfunzionale, io capisco benissimo che una persona o un ente che sta lavorando proprio in ricerca sia più concentrato su quello che è l'aspetto di, del prodotto, è preoccupato e si sente, sostanzialmente, anche pressato anche dal fatto di dover raggiungere il risultato, no? Il problema principale è il risolvere quello che non è andato bene, no? Quindi l'aspetto di andare a comunicare o così, credo e penso sia considerato come una perdita di tempo che faccia slittare ulteriormente il raggiungimento dell'obiettivo. Solo che chiaramente, probabilmente, l'interscambio era stato un po' limitato di informazioni. Magari in una settimana ci si sentiva, venivamo ragguagliati due volte e poi per un mese non si sapeva più niente. Quindi ecco, in questo modo non crei un team. No? Perché il team deve in qualche modo avere in termini temporali, dei riferimenti di dire, con una periodicità di poter scambiarsi delle informazioni. Perché se non viene creata una determinata sistematicità, un attimino credo che l'attività di team vada un po' a scemare nel tempo. Perché se ci incontriamo due volte la prima settimana, una volta la seconda e non ci incontriamo la terza, la quarta e la quinta probabilmente nessuno pensa che ci sarà un prossimo incontro per fare il punto della situazione.

Rinaldo Gatti

8) C: Cosa mi dice del team Auto?

I: in queste riunioni qualcuno almeno guarda i disegni, guarda l'offerta, non tutti purtroppo. Molti passeggiano in quella riunione come non fossero coinvolti. il motivo per cui le cose non arrivano a compimento nei tempi determinati sono

sempre dei motivi interfunzionali. Perché non mi è arrivata l'informazione, perché ... Infatti i team di industrializzazione perché funzionano? Perché vengono condivise le informazioni operative. Noi abbiamo bisogno della stessa cosa a un livello più alto ma abbiamo bisogno della stessa cosa. Io non so quello che fa il capo degli acquisti. Ma non voglio saperlo per criticarlo, voglio saperlo per regolarmi, per tenerne conto, no? Su ogni cosa. Ce le diciamo una volta alla settimana, una volta al mese. Ci diciamo cosa sto facendo, ti informo.

C: Quindi nel team operations confluirebbero gli stessi del team Auto, in buona sostanza.

I: Sì, sostanzialmente sì. Il team Auto è focalizzato ad Auto. Il team interfunzionale di operations, secondo me, dovrebbe essere un team in cui per esempio il capo dell'ufficio acquisti mi dice: "Guarda che io devo sfilare il tal fornitore e ne introduco un altro". Lo devo sapere! Lui lo fa e non mi dice niente. Lo vengo a sapere .... Per fare un esempio molto concreto, no? Lui, è chiarissimo che lui può farlo ed è legittimissimo che lo faccia ma

se me lo dici per tempo io ne tengo conto. Oppure io dico: "Sto lanciando questo progetto, avrò bisogno di queste informazioni o di queste collaborazioni. Oppure il capo dell'ufficio qualità dice: "Ho intenzione di investire in questo strumento di controllo perché voglio migliorare il controllo di queste caratteristiche". Lo devo sapere per i disegni. Io non lo so, o meglio, lo so ma lo so attraverso quarta mano, con informazioni distorte, passando ore ed ore! E' assurdo, di un contorto ... Infatti noi arriviamo in ritardo con un sacco di cose e finiamo tutti con l'essere infastiditi, tutti irritati. Che poi sono dei miserabili atteggiamenti che abbiamo adottato di dire: "Adesso io però questo non lo so perché lo sa il

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capo dell'ufficio acquisti. Questo non lo so perché lo sa il capo della produzione. In realtà tutti sanno tutto, però non si può dire perché le responsabilità sono degli altri. Le cose le sappiamo in realtà distorte attraverso il pettegolezzo. La cosa è veramente agghiacciante. Cioè, io non posso lavorare senza sapere chi è il mio fornitore, senza sapere qual è la macchina sulla quale il capo della produzione fa una cosa o sapere se una cosa si può controllare o no. Cioè, io devo sapere le cose che sanno gli altri, è necessario al mio lavoro. E come faccio se non me le dicono? Le vengo a sapere, mi informo. Spendo un mucchio di tempo a fare, a raccogliere elementi che dovrebbero essere noti a priori.

Antonino Corti

9) C: Cosa mi dice di questi primi sei, sette mesi di lavoro del team inter-funzionale trasmissioni?

I: Sì, esatto, è poco. Però qualche risultato si è visto. Qualche risultato si è visto. Fatto i complimenti anche il presidente. Non è da tutti.

C: Sì?

I: Certo. Ecco quello lì per lo meno dà soddisfazione. Adesso quando fai il report alla fine del mese, e mandato uno, mandati due, tre, al terzo ha mandato i complimenti õVedo che il lavoro gira bene, bene, andiamo avanti cosìö. Non ho portato a casa niente, però la soddisfazione cⵁè. E se uno ci tiene a queste coseí

C: Come Pierino Buffetti e Giacomo Precisi...

I: Esatto, O io anche forse più di loro. Perché comunque a me la pacca sulla spalla mi è sempre piaciuta averla. Queste cose qua ti danno soddisfazione (134 words).

10) I: Adessoí non abbiamo più in ufficio uno dei proprietari. Perché dopo che ha avuto un ictus adesso viene solo il pomeriggio. Fa proprio fatica a parlare.

C: Chi è?

I: Fabio. Lui era in ufficio con me, è lui che mi ha cresciuto a me, è lui che mi ha voluto, tutto quello che so me lǿha insegnato lui pian pianino. Per cui il fatto che ti diceva õBravoö e ti metteva proprio una mano sulla spalla, avendolo lì in ufficio ti dava soddisfazione. Per cui son cresciuto con queste piccole soddisfazioni. Il fatto che ancora anche adesso si accorgono comunque anche loro, fa piacere insomma (106 words).

11) I: Eǿ un poǿ stupido però ci tieni a quello che fai, allǿazienda. Cioè, io alla fine del mese quandoí . Tanto per farti un esempio che non ha niente a che vedere con questo qua. Cioè, lǿingegner Numerini tiene un sacco di, í di, í indici. Indici di qua, indici di là. E uno di questi qua è lǿindice di puntualità. Indice di puntualità che fino allǿanno scorso cǿera lǿindice di puntualità aziendale. Aziendale guardava la conferma, la data di scadenza della conferma rispetto a quando veniva fatta la bolla. OK. E continuava a dirmi: õE ma Gardoni tu sei al 70, 75 per cento. Lǿobiettivo aziendale è 90ö. Dico: õCasso, possibile che sono così indietro?ö. Poi a me scocciava perché vedevo gli altri í oltre il 70, io cǿho un orgoglio della Madonna. E allora, í faccio: õMa possibile?ö. E lui mi dice: õGuarda però che non è solo per colpa tua. Eǿ perché magari su di sopra, per motivi di pagamento e roba del genere, non fanno le bolle e quando lǿhan fatta slittaö. Go dé: õAh sì?ö. Va bene. Mettiamo in pista un altro indice allora.

C: (ridacchio).

I: Visto che nel frattempo era partito tutto un anbaradan informatico lì perí per i pezzi confezionati, e c'era anche la data in cui Corti, o comunque il magazzino, aveva finito la sua conferma. Poi, se era ferma per problemi economici, a noi non ci interessa più. Allora vedi che adesso il numero è salito (ridacchiamo). Però, rispetto a tutti gli altri miei colleghi, io sono l'unico che, anziché, í loro probabilmente non guardano neanche quello mensile, io una volta ogni settimana, dieci giorni, gli chiedo come sto andando. Ma proprio perché, a me piace che mi dicano: õBravo, sei stato bravoö (sorridiamo). (291 words)

Pierino Buffetti

12) I: í io mi ricordo quando ero ancora di là, io sono stato allo stabilimento uno per dieci anni, a tu per tu con il titolare e con l'ingegner Maestri, quando si facevano anche delle attrezzature í si collaborava e poi l'entusiasmo quando poi funzionavano í c'era. Secondo me è quello che mi ha tenuto e mi tiene ancora legato perché í con le persone che ci sono di là. Io non ho difficoltà per adesso, tocchiamo ferro, ad andare a chiedere la collaborazione. O so che comunque quando c'è qualcosa che non va me lo dicono direttamente e finita predica.... Ma anche come porsi con le persone. Perché, per dirne una, io, stando a contatto con il signor Fabio ho imparato tante cose, perché era un volpone. Nel senso, come relazionarsi. Era capace di unire le persone. Probabilmente una cosa che manca è il collante. (137 words).

13) I: Il fatto è che un difetto, secondo me, è che í già il fatto di farsi vedere i titolari í il signor Arturo sono mesi che non lo vediamo più. Il signor Mario,

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quando ero di là, tre volte al giorno veniva. E le lavate di capo che abbiamo preso io e Maestri lo sappiamo solo noi. Fanno crescere anche quelle.

C: Lui cøera tanto.

I: Guai, sta scherzando, í faceva il giro, passava il sabato a vedere gli stabilimenti. Sapeva tutto. Cercava di sapere tutto. Che ne so, í dalla porta a í che ne so í la cosa più importante. í Adesso tanti si aspettano una presenza più massiccia.

C: Si sente troppo il vuoto.

I: Sì, sì (con molta enfasi). (123 words)

14) I: Io lo dico sempre al dottor Severino, mio amico intimo, õGuarda che il carisma che aveva tuo padre, che trasmetteva, í ti dava energiaö. E comunque tutti noi siamo stati impregnati della loro í nel bene o nel male della loro í cultura, la voglia di fare í Però eran delle guide. Quando í per dire, io me lo sogno ancora di notte il signor Mario. Ma veramente, aveva un carisma cheí metà basta, veramente. Aveva il sesto, settimo senso. Veramente. Quando cøera qualcosa che non andava, lui arrivava. Aveva la capacità, lo dicono anche i suoi figli, quando cøera qualcosa che non andava lui aveva la capacità tac, di arrivare lì. (113 words)

Alvise Ronchi

15) C: Che cosa vede di diverso, visto che lei è qui da così tanti anni, quali sono i cambiamenti principali che vede?

I: Ma, il cambiamento principale sostanzialmente è questo. Che í alle persone è lasciata più responsabilità e più potere decisionale. Adesso abbiamo La

possibilità appunto di avere chiare quali sono i problemi, i limiti, le responsabilità, la possibilità di avere, nell'ambito della propria sfera, un minimo di autonomia per poter portare avanti quello che í diciamo í le cose che possono, í che sono state definite a livello di responsabilità diretta. Prima avevamo direttamente il titolare che praticamente decideva tutto lui. E di conseguenza anche i vari dirigenti o responsabili erano a supporto però la decisione finale sostanzialmente era sempre dalla proprietà in prima persona. No? (128 words)

Teresio Maestri

16) I: Beh, qualche volta è chiaro che essendo abituatia non prendere decisioni, in passato perché le decisioni le prendeva sempre una sola persona, í

C: Mario.

I: í eh, magari adesso è un pochino più distribuita questa í funzione e non Si sente í il peso di una figura. Le decisioni sono condivise. Qualche volta magari non sono magari diffuse in maniera capillare í però, cioè, io credo che í. Io credo, non lo so, cioè non vorrei dire neanche delle sciocchezzeí (82 words)

Alvise Ronchi

17) I: Anche se io devo dire che non mi sono mai trovato male. Però, alla fine, cioè, se veniva detto o sì o no, la parola ultima era sempre sua. Giusta o sbagliata non sta a me giudicare. Però un attimo adesso, un attimo più di responsabilizzazione perché, alla fine í della decisione che vai a prendere poi dopo ne devi anche in forma completa in tutti i suoi aspetti, devi essere responsabile. Mentre prima era come prevenire in forma, come aspetto formale

í   dare un suggerimento se il titolare ti diceva di sì, anche lui era comunque una scelta condivisa e un attimino si perdeva,í   se le cose poi andavano male í   non ci si sentiva, í   io mi sentivo sempre un poø agitato tra virgolette. Però formalmente cøera un poø, e questo è umano, dire õLøabbiamo, í   anche lui løha pensato così. No, no, non è che può sbagliare più di tantoö. Cioè, nel senso, non ho commesso un errore madornale. Questa è una giustificazione che sì, va bene, ma è nelløaspetto umano. No? Dal punto di vista professionale non ci può stare. Voglio dire í   (ridacchia nervosamente). (190 words)

Federico Rossi

18) I: Secondo me, cøè un forte retaggio ancora del passato in cui le discussioni, molte volte, erano dei trabocchetti che si í   cioè, queste riunioni í   venivano fatte per accusare una persona, per stimolarla, í   Molte volte veniva fatto così.

C: Qui le persone allora sentono di non poter dire perché hanno paura che dicendo chissà cosa succede.

I: Esatto.

C: Questo sta ipotizzando?

I: Sì, sì, sì. õBah, io sto zitto,í   non vengo, í   ö. í   õNon corro il rischioö. (90 words)

Alvise Ronchi

19) I: Io col signor Mario ho lavorato parecchi anni e lui era sempre presente in azienda í   cioè (ridacchia) í   quindi í   praticamente non andava í   nonostante così, alcune volte í   parlando gli si diceva anche õMa, perché non prende le

ferie?ö così, ecceteraí   Lui tassativamente solo quando løazienda era chiusa. (51 words)

Teresio Maestri

20) C: Quanto aleggia ancora Mario Rossi? Quanto è ancora in giro secondo lei?

I: Di sicuro non al mio livello. Qualcuno ogni tanto lo ricorda, ma anchøio lo ricordo molto volentieri perché,a parte che mi ha assunto lui, ma non è quello, è che í   sicuramente una persona carismatica í   Io løho visto anche in condizioni critiche perché era stato ammalato. Quando io sono stato assunto lui ha iniziato ad ammalarsi. Quindi løho visto anche nei suoi momenti peggiori. Proprio nel momento in cui faceva delle chemioterapie quindi aveva í   litigava un poø con tutti, í   son momenti anche un poø di, í   di, í . Di pazzia anche. Anche coi suoi fratelli, io ero in mezzo magari. Cøè qualcuno che lo ricorda, ovviamente lo ricorda soltanto per le cose buone, non ricorda magari di essere stato trattato anche male nonostante delle buone idee. E í   però direi che ormai è passata la cosa. ... Si ricorda volentieri un titolare perché ha fatto crescere løazienda in questo modo però è chiaro che le scelte adesso non le fa più Mario Rossi, le fa o il consiglio di fabbrica, o i dirigenti, o i preposti che sono deputati e pagati per farlo. Ormai questo non è più, í   non è più uno spettro che dà fastidio, che possa dar fastidio alle scelte. Ecco.

C: Chi adesso rappresenta løautorità qua?

I: Nessuno. Nessuno. (140 words)

Rinaldo Gatti

21) I: Ieri ha sospeso la riunione perché stavamo dicendo cose, secondo me anche abbastanza interessanti, invece lui era irritato. Sono modi di vedere il lavoro molto diversi. Quindi in queste condizioni sicuramente non c'è la possibilità di far germogliare í løinterfunzionalità. Se invece le persone vengono lasciate libere di parlare solo dei fatti della quotidianità del lavoro senza per forza arrossire o essere intimorite dalle eventuali ricadute negative di una decisione cattiva che possono anche ragionevolmente aver preso in buona fede prendere, no? Perché è poi questo il discorso. E beh, se tu li liberi da questa ansia le persone si comportano in un'altra maniera. (106 words)

Ivo Numerini

22) I: í Probabilmente, secondo me, buona parte di questa cosa nasce anche dal pregresso, dal passato, dall'esperienza. Non so se sia così, ma è un'idea che ho io ma non conosco bene i dati, in questo caso. Che la maggior parte dei manager si è fatto, dieci manager che siedono in comitato, otto sono qui da sempre. 12 anni, 15 anni. E quindi, la loro esperienza di vita, buona parte della loro esperienza è qui dentro. Non hanno vissuto altre realtà diverse, magari le hanno vissute in passato, però in questi dieci anni come sono stati abituati punto di domanda? C'era interfunzionalità? O per dieci anni gli hanno detto: õTu fai il tuo pezzettino, non ti preoccupareí ö. Non lo so, io non c'ero. Però ho la sensazione che a volte sia così. Nel senso che í penso, per come la vedo io, per come conosco gli imprenditori bresciani, í dove c'è una figura molto forte di imprenditore, ma questo vale in realtà anche se è un direttore generale. Uno cerca un po' di pararsi, di proteggersi le proprie parti...e í (espirazione sonora)

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quello è l'obiettivo, più che lavorare in gruppo. Cioè, lavorare in team è una cosa che, í   che deve nascere dall'alto, innanzitutto, se quella non è la direzione, difficile che siaí   lavoro interfunzionale.

C: Il fatto che ci sia un leader forte, fa mettere sulla difensiva gli altri?

I: Si proteggono sempre, sì.

C: Da che cosa?

I: Temono di non soddisfare a quelle che sono le aspettative del leader, che però non imposta il lavoro in termini di í   di collaborazione. Perché comunque sia, tu, credo sia anche corretto che hai un certoí   così í   tensione o timore verso colui il quale è il tuo capo, Poi alla fine, í   e che comunqueí   al quale devi rispondere del tuo lavoro, dimostrare che lo fai bene. Però è chiaro che se chi hai sopra dice: õFai il tuo pezzettino, fai le tue coseí ö e finisce lì, Tu fai il tuo pezzettino, le tue cose, l'importante è che le tue cose sian giuste. Poi ne parliamo. Poi se devo dare una mano agli altri, la do anche. quando cominciano ad arrivare i cazziatoni í   uno cerca di mostrare che non ha fatto cacchiate. Se tu imposti il lavoro in un certo modo, che non è solo dare un premio, cioè non è soltanto mettere dei paletti esteriori o comunque così, mettere così, un í   un í   recinto al lavoro. Ma è proprio, da un punto di vista operativo, í   lavorare insieme. í   tende ad essere un po'egoista, difende se stesso.

í   sbaglio io, faccio una cazzata, me lo vieni a rinfacciare. Allora prossima volta caos. Cioè, casino, cosa faccio? Piuttosto allora aspetti, chiedi anche. E quindi immobilizzi, ingessi un po'la situazione. (460 words)

Leonardo Brembilla

23) I: Poi ... (espirazione sonora media) son venuto via e sono andato in un'altra piccola aziendina, la Ferracina, í ... dove son rimasto per un anno e mezzo. Dove penso che abbia avuto le più grandi soddisfazioni ... e ... il periodo più bello della mia vita lavorativa.

C: Davvero?

I: Perché neppure se avessi lavorato da solo sarei stato così. Veramente, ... con gente di una comprensione, di, ... di, ... di un qualcosa di diverso da quello che ... cioè, secondo me quella gente lì è destinata ad andare in malora. Perché non può fare fortuna gente ... gente che ha quelle visioni del lavoro. Son stato lì un anno e mezzo, mi son trovato veramente ... facevo quello che volevo, avevo la chiave, entravo, uscivo quando volevo io. ... e se facevo, non so, qualcosa di più perché c'era bisogno di lavorare un sabato, ... o non so magari un paio d'ore anche alla domenica mattina, perché è successo ancora di lavorare anche alla domenica mattina, ... era stra stra stra ricompensato.

C: In quanti eravate?

I: E ... pochissimi, eravamo una decina di persone. Era torneria ... torneria pesante ... lavoravamo dei pezzi di dimensioni piuttosto ... dai 1500 ai 2000 millimetro sui due metri praticamente di diametro. E quando ci penso, onestamente mi rabbrividisco; perché pensare che un ragazzo di 15 anni che praticamente í di meccanica non conosceva niente, era alle prime í lavorare, creare, í quel pezzo lì, che un pezzo del genere, quando ci andava bene, era í sulle 10, 12 ore di lavoro. Non era un pezzo che poteva mettersi in tasca la sera se l'aveva sbagliato, buttarlo via.

C: E' stato l'anno e mezzo più bello lavorativamente.

I: Sì, sì, sì, sì. Sì, indubbiamente, indubbiamente. Poi era proprio diciamo unøaziendina a livello famigliare, si può dire. Io ero løultimo arrivato e í cøera il papà diciamo dei, dei í dei due capoccia là. Alle nove della mattina passava, mi dava i soldi e mi mandava a prendere la colazione. í Løestate quando faceva caldo, prendi e vai a prendere da bere. Perché allora non cøerano diciamo i frigo come ci sono adesso nelle aziende. Essendo una cosa piccola í (noto che cambia spesso posizione sulla sedia) Ma veramente guardi, non saprei più dove andare a trovare Una cosa del genere. No. Ormai, í ormai al giorno døoggi tutto il lavoro, soprattutto nelle aziende è tutta unøaltra cosa. Si può dire che la stragrande maggioranza di noi siamo dei numeri eí Questa è í diciamo í la, la í la vera azienda bresciana. Perché questa in realtà è la vera azienda bresciana. Il concetto, la mentalità dei bresciani, dei veneti, di quella gente lì, è veramente questa, eh!

C: Cioè di produrre, produrre, produrre í

I: Esatto, esatto.

C: í met via, met via, í met via í

I: Esatto, esatto, esatto. Questo è il concetto dei bresciani, dei veronesi, dei bergamaschi è questo. Allora, se io voglio andare a casa alla sera e dire í prima di tutto guardarsi indietro se durante il giorno si è fatto quel che si doveva fare o che cosa. E poi voglio essere a posto con la mia coscienza. La prima cosa che mi interessa a me è essere a posto con la mia coscienza. Sapere di aver fatto, di aver svolto al meglio il mio lavoro. Poi tutto il resto per me í conta poco (573 words).

Guido Luraghi

24) C: Come ha preso la notizia, o la proposta di far parte del team?

I: í   In maniera positiva. í   Io ho una concezione del lavoro í   cioè, a me piace lavorare. Nel senso, í   , í   lavorare dobbiamo lavorare tutti, quindi io preferisco lavorare nel migliore dei modi. Quindi í   non mi fan paura le responsabilità, ma anzi mi stimolano a fare meglio. Quindi è stato í   una cosa positiva, í   sicuramente. í   E gratificante, perché se me lǿhanno proposto vuol dire che bene o male il mio lavoro lo faccio abbastanza bene (93 words).

Ottavio Rubini

25) C: Voi vi sentite uniti come team?

I: Sì (detto senza indugio). Sì.

C: Ok. Siete uniti, vi piace quello che fate, í

I: E certo. Diciamo che il gruppo di cui son composti è tutto persone che tiene al lavoro che sta facendo. Non è persone cheí   come dicevo, í   í   alle cinque staccano, no. Forse per quello che è più compatto. Nel senso, í   boh. Ci teniamo di più (68 words).

Giacomo Precisi

26) C: Come lǿha presa quando le hanno chiesto di far parte del team?

I: Ma í   come tutte le robe í   come ho preso questa, vediamo comǿè, cioè prima di esprimere un giudizio í   non si venda mai la pelle dellǿorso, no? Per cui vediamo, dopo al limite í   si trarranno le conclusioni. Fermo restando il fatto che se, indipendentemente da quello si è deciso che .. si è í   si è deciso che va fatto, eh il pensiero personale può anche essere relativo. Nel senso che io

ragiono con la mia ottica di veduta che è forse ferma a quello che è il mio campicello, orticello. Che è trent'anni che coltivo l'azienda, questa azienda. Invece, se nell'arco più ampio è stato deciso così, vuol dire che è stato valutato che s'ha da fare, e quindi non ci sono né santi né madonne e si fa e basta (148 words).

27) C: Quindi il team ha contribuito a questo? (mi riferisco al migliorato rapporto con Pierino Buffetti di cui si è discusso nel capitolo 5).

I: Diciamo che il team ha contribuito ad accelerare il tutto. Perché, alla fin fine, poi almeno'   il mio punto di vista, '   ce ne sarebbero tante di posizioni personali difendibili, indifendibili all'interno dell'azienda, però ecco, alla fin fine, in qualsiasi caso deve prevalere il bene comune, che praticamente è il lavoro e basta. Io ho, sono monoreddito, nel senso che lavoro solo io. Ho due figli che fanno le superiori e uno forse farà l'università. Quindi ci siamo già capiti. Quindi, indipendentemente dalle posizioni personali, eccetera, eccetera, l'importante è lavorare, mantenere il decoro della famiglia e andare avanti. Quello viene innanzi a tutto. Sulla vestaglia non c'è scritto õPrecisiö, c'è scritto õRossiö. Il bene comune, come ho detto prima, è il bene comune dell'azienda. Perché alla fin fine possiamo parlare finché ne vogliamo, ma che conta alla fin fine è che l'azienda deve andare avanti. Deve pagare chi è dentro. Deve svilupparsi, eccetera, eccetera. Per cui cioè, ' . Da quel punto di vista lì posizioni personali, ripeto, non ce ne sono, ci sono le discussioni normali. Guai se non ci fossero.

Perché uno dei ragazzi che è con me,ha il figlio che è quattro mesi che non prende lo stipendio, no? E dico sempre: õShcec, attenzione. Noi possiamo

criticare tutto quello che, se c'è qualcosa che non va, ma è giusto criticare. Però ricordiamoci che se il buon Rossi a fine mese (ridacchia) non dà il cedolino, possiamo… Cè chi c'ha il mutuo da pagare, si è appena sposato, eccetera, eccetera. E poi la nostra realtà rapportata a certi altri, ma non solo, ripeto, di quantità di lavoro, ma anche di rapporti eccetera, o di svolgimento lavoro, o scale gerarchiche eccetera, rapportate ad aziende più piccole, cioè, diciamo, stiamo molto meglio (316 words).

Rinaldo Gatti

28) I: Eh deve sapere che prima che, cioè che quando pompe acqua era un solo stabilimento con una sola struttura operativa, l'industrializzazione pompe acqua la facevo io e curavo io il coordinamento interfunzionale. Ma eravamo in pochi ed era facile. Il controllo veniva fatto a vista. E veniva benissimo, cioè non c'è problema. Seguendo un prodotto il controllo a vista è più che sufficiente. Tant'è vero che si andava bene. Forse poteva andare meglio, ma insomma non c'era mai stato un problema di time to market grossolano, piuttosto che un problema di industrializzazione cospicuo.. Il motivo era che io a vista facevo, prendevo quello degli acquisti, prendevo quello della produzione, prendevo quello della programmazione, li mettevo insieme, giravo la manovella e veniva fuori la roba. Eh però io ero io. Ero un dirigente, se dicevo qualcosa agli acquisti, era quello che dicevo io, no? Ero un po' un despota, nel senso buono. Però, voglio dire, era facile fare le cose. Dicevo õfai così, fai colà, fai quell'altroö. E quindi, diciamo piuttosto anche piuttosto primitivo, no? Di mandare avanti le cose, però era sufficiente (192 words).

29) C: Ma secondo lei, se vi presentaste come fronte compatto, come management, alla proprietà, con delle idee condivise, dei suggerimenti, la proprietà sarebbe più o ugualmente propensa ad ascoltarvi?

I: No, più propensa. Sì, però bisogna arrivare uniti, compatti e con le idee.

C: C'è qualcuno che può prender il bandolo della matassa tra voi manager?

I: Dico sinceramente?

C: Sì.

I: C'ho pensato. Prima, di farlo singolarmente, perché poi va beh, ho parlato con l'ingegner Arturo e mi sono un po' accontentato. Però, la mia intenzione martedì scorso era quella di convocare il consiglio di amministrazione e andare personalmente a parlare di questo.

Poi, va beh, ho chiarito, ho chiarito? Ho parlato un po' con l'ingegner Arturo che è d'accordo con me sul fatto comunque che dobbiamo essere uniti è fondamentale, bisogna serrare i ranghi in questo momento. Perché queste dimissioni sono significative.

C: E ma soprattutto tra voi manager'

I: Esatto.

C: però adesso c'è un CDA frammentato, c'è un management frammentato. C'è una forza lavoro frammentata. Da qualche parte una coesività deve cominciare. No? Però ci vuole qualcuno che abbia la voglia, la grinta. Magari è una cosa alla quale vale la pena di pensarci.

I: Sì. Sicuramente sì. C'ho pensato, c'ho pensato, però pensavo comunque di farlo í cioè avevo pensato di andare singolarmente. Però non saprei nemmeno come'

C: Singolarmente non so quanto verrete ascoltati.

I: Mh. Dipende peròí Cioè, forse il fatto di aver pensato singolarmente perché magari pensavo che ci fosse un riconoscimento personale. Perché sai, magari singolarmente pensi più a te stesso. E, in effetti, non puoi pensare di andare singolarmente se hai in mente il bene delløazienda solamente e non il tuo io, per acquisire magari più potereí (533 words).